

<http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz>

University of Auckland Research Repository, ResearchSpace

### Copyright Statement

The digital copy of this thesis is protected by the Copyright Act 1994 (New Zealand).

This thesis may be consulted by you, provided you comply with the provisions of the Act and the following conditions of use:

- Any use you make of these documents or images must be for research or private study purposes only, and you may not make them available to any other person.
- Authors control the copyright of their thesis. You will recognise the author's right to be identified as the author of this thesis, and due acknowledgement will be made to the author where appropriate.
- You will obtain the author's permission before publishing any material from their thesis.

### General copyright and disclaimer

In addition to the above conditions, authors give their consent for the digital copy of their work to be used subject to the conditions specified on the [Library Thesis Consent Form](#) and [Deposit Licence](#).

**Art-related Encounters and Interactions: Contact  
and Exchange between New Zealand and the United  
States, 1955 to 1974**

Ian Anthony Cooke

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Art History.

The University of Auckland

2015

## **Abstract**

From the mid-1950s, there was an acceleration in various forms of art-related interactions and encounters between New Zealand and the United States. These encompassed trips in both directions by people involved in the visual arts as well as a range of exhibitions, including several of modern American art that travelled to New Zealand. This thesis examines a selection of the most important of these that took place in the years from 1955 to 1974, with a particular focus on those initiated by, or involving, governments and institutions.

Many of the interactions under investigation have never been looked at in any depth and the thesis utilises a range of primary source material to reconstruct them. In doing so, I demonstrate the complex combination of factors that prompted them, and explore their impacts and implications, showing how art-related interactions informed, and were informed by, broader artistic, political and institutional contexts.

The thesis shows the importance of such interactions within what was a formative period in New Zealand art history and in the growth of the New Zealand arts scene, when the art gallery institution developed and New Zealand artists were looking further afield for inspiration. It also connects them to the period in which American art was coming to global prominence, and was increasingly distributed around the world. I argue that there was a clear link between art-related interactions and the political relationship between New Zealand and the United States that had developed as a result of World War II. In the aftermath of that war New Zealand shifted away from its traditional relationships with Great Britain, and aligned increasingly with the United States. More particularly, in the period under investigation, the fact that the two countries were allies in two major conflicts, the ongoing Cold War and the Vietnam War, impacted on and informed a number of the interactions that took place, demonstrating the complex links between socio-political factors and the art scene.

## Acknowledgements

There are many people I would like to thank for their support, assistance and engagement with this project. First and foremost I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Professor Elizabeth Rankin for her unparalleled generosity, academic rigour, guidance and support throughout. I would also like to thank my second supervisor, Associate Professor Len Bell for his insights, as well as the rest of the staff of the Department of Art History at the University of Auckland

This thesis is based in a great deal of archival research and I would like to record my thanks to all the institutions, and their staff, that I visited and corresponded with. A full list is detailed in the bibliography, but I would particularly like to thank the staff of the Fine Arts Library of the University of Auckland; Catherine Hammond, Tom Irwin and Caroline McBride at the E. H. McCormick Research Library, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki; Eric Riddler at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Jennifer Commins at the Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries; Sue Ellen Jeffers at the Blanton Museum of Art, the University of Texas at Austin; Jennifer Twist at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa archives; Eoin Lynch at the New Plymouth District Council; Kelly Wells at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery; Barbara Rominski at the Research Library and Archives, San Francisco Museum of Art; Tim Jones at the Christchurch Art Gallery, and Kay Brown at the University of Washington Library. I would also like to thank the many people, including artists, critics and Auckland City Art Gallery staff, who offered their recollections of the period under investigation: Gretchen Albrecht, Bruce Barber, Nancy Bracey, Gordon Brown, John Coley, Judith Cornwell, Wystan Curnow, Gil Docking, Vivienne Hutchison, Hamish Keith, Quentin Macfarlane, Ross Ritchie, John Simpson, John B. Turner and Mervyn Williams.

Finally, special thanks must go to my family: my parents, Elizabeth and Tony Cooke, for their life-long support of my endeavours, my sister Fiona and brother-in-law Jaco, and most especially my wife Meg.

# Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Contents.....	iv
List of Illustrations.....	viii
List of Abbreviations.....	xiii
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
- Parameters of the thesis.....	2
- Disciplinary frameworks.....	3
- Methodology and sources.....	9
- Structure of the thesis.....	10
<b>Chapter One: The Developing Relationship</b> .....	<b>13</b>
- New Zealand and the United States: artistic relations and exchange prior to World War II.....	13
- New Zealand and the United States: political relations from World War II to 1954.....	18
- The US Information Programme, Art and New Zealand.....	20
o <i>Advancing American Art</i> .....	22
o The reinstatement of the US information programme in New Zealand.....	23
o The United States Information Agency.....	25
o The American art community and the desire to send American art abroad.....	25
- The Improving Cultural Climate in New Zealand.....	28
o The Auckland City Art Gallery.....	32
- 1955-1958: Increasing Interactions and Encounters.....	35
o The Museum of Modern Art and New Zealand.....	36
o The growing role of the United States Information Service.....	38
- <i>Eight American Artists</i> .....	45
o The exhibition as Cold War propaganda.....	45

○ The exhibition comes to New Zealand.....	47
○ The Pacific selection.....	48
○ Framing the exhibition.....	50
○ The New Zealand response.....	53
○ 1958: Highpoint and decline of the United States Information Service.....	56

## **Chapter Two: The Auckland City Art Gallery and Its Role in Increasing**

### **Interactions, 1958-1963** 61

- Colin McCahon in the United States.....	61
○ The genesis of the trip and the role of Dr. Morley.....	62
○ Understanding the involvement of the Carnegie Corporation of New York.....	65
○ Reconstructing McCahon's trip.....	67
○ Outcomes: McCahon as art gallery professional.....	69
○ Outcomes: McCahon and modern American painting.....	73
○ Other interactions.....	77
- <i>Painting from the Pacific</i> .....	78
○ The premise behind the exhibition.....	78
○ The development of the exhibition.....	81
○ The US West Coast selection.....	82
○ The presentation of <i>Painting from the Pacific</i> in New Zealand.....	89
○ Responses to the exhibition.....	91
○ Assessing the impact of <i>Painting from the Pacific</i> .....	95
○ <i>International Prints and Drawings from West Coast USA</i> .....	98

### **Chapter Three: The Continuing Growth of Interactions, 1964-1968** 101

- The Vietnam War.....	102
- Individual Interactions.....	104
○ John Coley in the United States.....	105
○ Grants from the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council and the Carnegie Corporation of New York to New Zealanders.....	108
○ Jim Allen in the United States.....	112
○ Americans in New Zealand.....	114

-	<i>Contemporary American Painting from the James A. Michener Collection</i>	120
o	The James A. Michener Foundation Collection.....	121
o	The origins of the exhibition and its development.....	122
o	The exhibition .....	127
o	Framing the exhibition.....	131
o	New Zealand responses to the exhibition.....	134
-	Exhibitions from the Museum of Modern Art’s International Program.....	140
o	The International Program.....	141
o	The New Zealand perspective.....	143
o	The exhibitions.....	145
o	International Program exhibitions and the Vietnam War.....	150
	<b>Chapter Four: Interactions Initiated from New Zealand, 1969-1974</b>	<b>154</b>
-	<i>New Zealand Contemporary Painting</i> .....	154
-	The Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council.....	163
o	Individual interactions.....	164
-	The Auckland City Art Gallery.....	165
o	<i>Pacific Cities Loan Exhibition</i> .....	167
o	<i>Morris Louis</i> .....	169
o	Acquisitions of American art.....	172
o	The Auckland City Art Gallery after Docking.....	176
-	The Govett-Brewster Art Gallery.....	177
o	Robert Ballard.....	179
-	<i>The State of California Painting</i> .....	180
o	The origins of the show.....	181
o	The selection.....	183
o	The framing of the exhibition.....	186
o	New Zealand responses to the exhibition.....	188
o	Assessing the impact the exhibition.....	191
o	After <i>The State of California Painting</i> .....	192
	<b>Chapter Five: Interactions Initiated from the United States, 1969-1974</b>	<b>194</b>
-	The United States Information Service in the 1970s.....	194
o	<i>Frederic Remington</i> .....	196

o Art and Protest.....	198
- The International Program and New Zealand.....	200
o The International Program and Australia.....	201
o The New Zealand perspective.....	202
o Understanding the nature of the Australasian programme.....	206
o International Program exhibitions in New Zealand.....	212
- <i>Some Recent American Art</i> .....	217
o The development of the exhibition.....	217
o The selection.....	220
o Assessing the exhibition: historical and political contexts.....	224
o Protests in Adelaide.....	228
o The presentation of <i>Some Recent American Art</i> in New Zealand....	229
o New Zealand responses to the exhibition.....	233
o After <i>Some Recent American Art</i> .....	238
<b>Conclusion</b>	240
<b>Bibliography</b>	246
- Unpublished Sources.....	246
- Published Sources.....	248
<b>Illustrations</b>	259



## List of Illustrations

Figure 1: Mark Tobey, *New York*, 1944, Tempera on board, 84 x 53cm. Image source: Kosme de Barañano and Matthias Bärmann, eds., *Mark Tobey* (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, 1997), 179.

Figure 2: Mark Tobey, *Gothic*, 1943, Tempera on cardboard, 70.5 x 54.6cm. Image source: Kosme de Barañano and Matthias Bärmann, eds., *Mark Tobey* (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, 1997), 169.

Figure 3: Morris Graves, *Bird Depressed by the Length of Winter in 1944*, 1944, Tempera and ink on paper-covered board, 65.7 x 124.6cm. Image source: Portland Art Museum,  
<http://www.portlandartmuseum.us/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=10732;type=101>

Figure 4: Guy Anderson, *Dry Country*, 1955, Watercolour and pastel on cardboard, 76.8 x 102.2cm. Image source: Seattle Art Museum,  
[http://www1.seattleartmuseum.org/eMuseum/code/emuseum.asp?style=browse&currentrecord=1&newprofile=objects&newpage=search\\_advanced&newvalues=1](http://www1.seattleartmuseum.org/eMuseum/code/emuseum.asp?style=browse&currentrecord=1&newprofile=objects&newpage=search_advanced&newvalues=1)

Figure 5: Kenneth Callahan, *Tides*, 1948-49, Oil on gessoed plywood, 60.2 x 80.2cm. Image source: The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts,  
<https://www.pafa.org/collection/tides>

Figure 6: Rhys Caparn, *Birds Walking by the Sea*, 1950, Bronze, 25.4 x 38.1cm. Image source: The Research Library and Archive, Art Gallery of New South Wales.

Figure 7: David Hare, *Night Dance*, 1951, Steel, bronze and copper wire construction, 81.3 x 27.3cm. Image source: The Research Library and Archive, Art Gallery of New South Wales.

Figure 8: Seymour Lipton, *Germinal*, 1953, Nickel-silver on steel, 59.7 x 38.1cm. Image source: The Research Library and Archive, Art Gallery of New South Wales.

Figure 9: Peter Tomory (left) with James Pettus, Jr., inspecting works from *Eight American Artists*. Image source: *New Zealand Herald*, 8 January 1958.

Figure 10: Karl Kasten, *Fragment of Autumn*, 1958, Oil on canvas, 76.2 x 101.6cm. Image source: Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki,  
<http://www.aucklandartgallery.com/the-collection/browse-artwork/2838/fragment-of-autumn>

Figure 11: Helen Lundeberg, *Desert Road (Landscape)*, 1960, Oil on canvas, 127 x 101.6cm. Image source: Dave Hickey, *Helen Lundeberg and the Illusory Landscape: Five Decades of Painting* (Los Angeles: Feitelson Arts Foundation, 2004), 47.

Figure 12: Richard Diebenkorn, *Berkeley No. 23*, 1955, Oil on canvas, 157.5 x 139.1cm. Image source: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, <http://www.sfmoma.org/explore/collection/artwork/25>

Figure 13: Hassel Smith, *Untitled*, 1960, Oil on canvas, 176.7 x 172.7cm. Image source: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, <http://www.sfmoma.org/explore/collection/artwork/4946>

Figure 14: Elmer Bischoff, *Orange Sweater*, 1955, Oil on canvas, 123.2 x 144.8cm. Image source: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, <http://www.sfmoma.org/explore/collection/artwork/3636>

Figure 15: Gordon Onslow-Ford, *Live Rock*, 1960, Parle's paint on canvas, 181.6 x 99.7cm. Image source: Auckland City Art Gallery, *Painting from the Pacific: Japan, America, Australia, New Zealand* (Auckland: Pelorus Press, 1961), 27.

Figure 16: *Painting from the Pacific*, 1961. Auckland City Art Gallery installation view. Image source: E. H. McCormick Research Library, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.

Figure 17: *Painting from the Pacific*, 1961. Auckland City Art Gallery installation view. Image source: E. H. McCormick Research Library, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.

Figure 18: *Painting from the Pacific*, 1961. Auckland City Art Gallery installation view. Image source: E. H. McCormick Research Library, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.

Figure 19: *Painting from the Pacific*, 1961. Auckland City Art Gallery installation view. Image source: E. H. McCormick Research Library, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.

Figure 20: *Painting from the Pacific*, 1961. Auckland City Art Gallery installation view. Image source: E. H. McCormick Research Library, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.

Figure 21: George Miyasaki, *October Landscape*, 1961, Collage and gouache on brown waterproof paper, 61 x 56.6cm. Image source: E. H. McCormick Research Library, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.

Figure 22: Hans Hoffmann, *X Orange*, 1959, Oil on canvas, 133.1 x 154.3cm. Image source: Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, <http://collection.blantonmuseum.org/Obj14512?sid=106891&x=2285995>

Figure 23: Hans Hofmann, *Elysium*, 1960, Oil on canvas, 214 x 127.7cm. Image source: Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, <http://collection.blantonmuseum.org/Obj14514?sid=99804&x=2126111>

Figure 24: Franz Kline, *Black and White No. 2*, 1960, Oil on canvas, 203.9 x 155cm. Image source: Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, <http://collection.blantonmuseum.org/Obj14504?sid=99804&x=2126293>

Figure 25: Philip Guston, *The Alchemist*, 1960, Oil on canvas, 155 x 171cm. Image source: Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, <http://collection.blantonmuseum.org/Obj14139?sid=99804&x=2126353>

Figure 26: Joan Mitchell, *Rock Bottom*, 1960-61, Oil on canvas, 198.1 x 172.7cm. Image source: Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, <http://collection.blantonmuseum.org/Obj14471?sid=99804&x=2126403>

Figure 27: Morris Louis, *Water-Shot*, 1961, Acrylic on unsized canvas, 214.7 x 135.3cm. Image source: Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, <http://collection.blantonmuseum.org/Obj14494?sid=99804&x=2126449>

Figure 28: Kenneth Noland, *Split Spectrum*, 1961, Acrylic on unsized canvas, 177.6 x 177.6cm. Image source: Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, <http://collection.blantonmuseum.org/Obj14466?sid=99804&x=2126510>

Figure 29: Ellsworth Kelly, *High Yellow*, 1960, Oil on canvas, 204.6 x 146.8cm. Image source: Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, <http://collection.blantonmuseum.org/Obj14506?sid=99804&x=2126569>

Figure 30: Larry Rivers, *Dead Veteran*, 1961, Oil on canvas, 205.8 x 132.2cm. Image source: Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, <http://collection.blantonmuseum.org/Obj14448?sid=99804&x=2126640>

Figure 31: Hamish Keith with Jim Dine's *Four Coats*, 1961, Oil and collage on canvas, 183.9 x 306.4cm. Image source: *New Zealand Woman's Weekly*, 14 June 1965.

Figure 32: George Ortman, *The Good Life or Living by the Rules*, Collage construction, 122 x 183cm. Image source: Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, <http://collection.blantonmuseum.org/Obj14207?sid=99804&x=2126706>

Figure 33: *Contemporary American Painting from the James A. Michener Collection*, 1965. Auckland City Art Gallery installation view. Image source: *New Zealand Woman's Weekly*, 14 June 1965.

Figure 34: Rita Angus, *Hawke's Bay Storm*, c. 1969, Oil on hardboard, 60 x 60cm. Image source: Vita Cochran and Jill Trevelyan. *Rita Angus: Live to Paint and Paint to Live* (Auckland: Godwit/Random House in association with City Gallery Wellington and Hocken Library, Dunedin, 2001), plate 23.

Figure 35: Don Binney, *Pacific Frigate Bird I*, 1968, Oil and acrylic on canvas, 183.3 x 152cm. Image source: Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa, <http://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/object/39082>

Figure 36: Milan Mrkusich, *Theme and Counter Theme*, 1966, Oil on canvas, 116.8 x 116.8cm. Image source: Alan Wright and Edward Hanfling. *Mrkusich: The Art of Transformation* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2009), plate 42.

Figure 37: *Morris Louis*, 1971. Auckland City Art Gallery installation view. Image source: E. H. McCormick Research Library, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.

Figure 38: Morris Louis, *Beta Nu*, 1960, Synthetic polymer paint on unprimed canvas, 259.1 x 701cm in *Morris Louis*, 1971. Auckland City Art Gallery installation view. Image source: E. H. McCormick Research Library, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.

Figure 39: Robert Indiana, *Love*, 1968, Felt, 152.4 x 152.4cm. Image source: Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, <http://www.aucklandartgallery.com/the-collection/browse-artwork/3664/love>

Figure 40: Helen Frankenthaler, *Black Came In*, Acrylic on canvas, 1965-66, 175.2 x 71.1cm, Image source: Author's photograph.

Figure 41: Ed Ruscha, *Spoil*, 1971, Gunpowder and pastel on paper, 29.2 x 73.6cm. Image source: Christies, <http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/lot/ed-ruscha-spoil-4803923-details.aspx?intObjectID=4803923>

Figure 42: Ralph Goings, *Yellow Chevrolet with Palm Trees*, 1970-71, 121.9 x 88.9cm (black and white image). Image source: Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, *The State of California Painting* (New Plymouth: Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, 1972), [43].

Figure 43: Joel Bass, *000111*, 1971, Synthetic lacquer on canvas, 142.2 x 221cm. Image source: Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, *The State of California Painting* (New Plymouth: Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, 1972), [21].

Figure 44: Ronald Davis, *Plane Divider*, 1970, Polyester resin and fibreglass, 167.6 x 295.3cm. Image source: Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, *The State of California Painting* (New Plymouth: Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, 1972), [31].

Figure 45: Frederic Remington, *A Dash for the Timber*, 1889, Oil on canvas, 123.2 x 214cm. Image source: Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas, <http://www.cartermuseum.org/artworks/261>

Figure 46: Art Workers' Coalition, *Q. And Babies? A. And Babies*, 1970, Poster combining Ronald L. Haeberle's photograph of the My Lai Massacre with quote from a CBS News interview with US soldier Paul Meadlo. Image source: Matthew Israel, *Kill for Peace: American Artists Against the Vietnam War* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013), [plate 11].

Figure 47: Hans Bellmer, *La Poupée*, 1936 (cast 1965), Painted aluminium, 48.3 x 27.3 x 37.5cm in *Surrealism*, 1972. Auckland City Art Gallery installation view. Image source: *New Zealand Herald*, 20 July 1972.

Figure 48: Carl Andre, *Lever*, 1966, 137 firebricks, 11.4 x 22.5 x 883.9cm. Image source: National Gallery of Canada, <http://www.gallery.ca/en/see/collections/artwork.php?mkey=7910>

Figure 49: Donald Judd, *Untitled*, 1968, Galvanised iron, ten units, each: 15.2 x 68.6 x 61cm. Image source: E. H. McCormick Research Library, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.

Figure 50: Robert Morris, *Untitled*, c. 1970, Felt, 182.9 x 457.2cm. Image source: E. H. McCormick Research Library, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.

Figure 51: Richard Serra, *Prop*, 1968, Lead, overall: 259 x 152 x 112cm, edition of 6. Image source: National Gallery of Australia, <http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=14963>

Figure 52: Eva Hesse, *Contingent*, 1969, Cheesecloth, latex and fibreglass, overall: 350 x 630 x 109cm. Image source: National Gallery of Australia, <http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=49353>

Figure 53: Joseph Kosuth, *Titled (Art as Idea as Idea) [radical]*, 1968, Photostat, 121.9 x 121.9cm. Image source: Jennifer Licht, *Some Recent American Art* (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 1973).

Figure 54: John Baldessari, *Throwing Three Balls in the Air to Get an Equilateral Triangle (Best of 36 Tries)* (detail), 1972-73, Colour photographs mounted on cardboard, five panels, each 33.7 x 50.8cm. Image source: Google image search, [https://www.google.co.nz/search?q=John+Baldessari,+Throwing+Three+Balls+in+the+Air+to+Get+an+Equilateral+Triangle+%28Best+of+36+Tries%29,+1972-73&biw=1233&bih=621&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ei=OAJMVZG3OcPCmwWgq4CAA&ved=0CAcQ\\_AUoAQ#imgrc=\\_](https://www.google.co.nz/search?q=John+Baldessari,+Throwing+Three+Balls+in+the+Air+to+Get+an+Equilateral+Triangle+%28Best+of+36+Tries%29,+1972-73&biw=1233&bih=621&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ei=OAJMVZG3OcPCmwWgq4CAA&ved=0CAcQ_AUoAQ#imgrc=_)

Figure 55: *Some Recent American Art*, 1974. Auckland City Art Gallery installation view. Image source: E. H. McCormick Research Library, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.

Figure 56: *Some Recent American Art*, 1974. Auckland City Art Gallery installation view. Image source: E. H. McCormick Research Library, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.

Figure 57: *Some Recent American Art*, 1974. Auckland City Art Gallery installation view. Image source: E. H. McCormick Research Library, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.

Figure 58: Mel Bochner, *Untitled*, 1974, variable dimensions. Auckland City Art Gallery installation view. Image source: E. H. McCormick Research Library, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.

## List of Abbreviations

AAC	Arts Advisory Council, New Zealand
ACAG	Auckland City Art Gallery
AC	Auckland Council
ACC	Auckland City Council
AGMANZ	Art Galleries and Museums Association of New Zealand
AGNSW	Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
AJHR	Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives, New Zealand
ANZ	Archives New Zealand
ANZUS	Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty
AS	<i>Auckland Star</i>
BMA	The Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin
CAG	Christchurch Art Gallery
CAS	Community Arts Service, New Zealand
CCNY	Carnegie Corporation of New York
DPAG	Dunedin Public Art Gallery
EP	<i>Evening Post</i> , Wellington
GBAG	Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth
MoMA	Museum of Modern Art, New York
NAG	National Art Gallery, Wellington
NGV	National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
NPDC	New Plymouth District Council
NZH	<i>New Zealand Herald</i> , Auckland
ODT	<i>Otago Daily Times</i> , Dunedin
PLC	Parks and Library Committee, Auckland City Council
QEIIAC	Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, New Zealand
RMAG	Robert MacDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
SAM	Seattle Art Museum
SFMA	San Francisco Museum of Art
SFMOMA	San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
SI	Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC

SITES	Smithsonian Institution Travelling Exhibition Service, Washington, DC
USIA	United States Information Agency
USIS	United States Information Service
USIE	United States International Information and Educational Exchange Program
VAC	Visual Arts Committee, Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council

## Introduction

On 20 February 1956, the director of the San Francisco Museum of Art (SFMA, now the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art), Dr. Grace McCann Morley, arrived in New Zealand as part of a global tour sponsored by the US State Department. Morley travelled around the country, visiting museums and galleries in the four main centres, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin and Auckland, and speaking on topics such as contemporary American art and museum education. On her last day in the country, 5 March 1956, she met with the new director of the Auckland City Art Gallery (ACAG, now the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki), Peter Tomory, who had coincidentally just arrived in Auckland from England on the same day to take up his post. In part as a result of this contact, Tomory later wrote to Morley regarding an initiative to send ACAG staff to the United States for professional development. This would, in turn, lead to Colin McCahon's seminal 1958 trip to the United States in which Morley played a major organisational role, establishing an itinerary and helping to arrange funding. This trip was not only of central importance to the evolution of McCahon's artistic practice, but it also represented a significant moment in the growing interest in post-war American art in New Zealand, and had repercussions for the ACAG as an institution. In addition, this contact with Morley and the SFMA would be a factor in two exhibitions organised by the ACAG featuring West Coast American art: *Painting from the Pacific* in 1961 and *Drawings from West Coast USA* in 1962.

Despite its importance, Morley's visit, and the reasons behind it, have never been examined and its connection to later events have only received cursory acknowledgement. Moreover, it is but one example of an acceleration in art-related encounters and interactions between New Zealand and the United States that took place from the mid-1950s. These encompassed not only trips by Americans involved in the visual arts to New Zealand, but also travel in the opposite direction by New Zealand artists, art critics and museum professionals. They also included exhibitions from US art museums, exhibitions of American art organised by New Zealand art galleries and acquisitions of the same. With limited exceptions, these encounters and interactions have not been explored in any depth. Consequently, this thesis shows why art-related encounters and interactions between New Zealand and the United



States increased, and traces, documents and analyses a representative selection of these from 1955 to 1974. In that year, the International Program of the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA) sent out the exhibition *Some Recent American Art* to the ACAG, the last major group show of American art to come to New Zealand in the 1970s. I consider such issues as the motivations behind these encounters and interactions, what their purposes were, and their reception in New Zealand in order to situate them within, and show how they impacted on, wider artistic, political, institutional and historical contexts.

In the period from 1955 to 1974 there were significant changes within the arts infrastructure in New Zealand and attitudes towards modern art, and the understanding of it, improved. Likewise, artistic practice evolved in a range of directions as New Zealand artists became increasingly interested in new trends, particularly those coming out of the United States. This coincided with the time when recent developments in American art were coming to international prominence as the US government and US art institutions sent out exhibitions of this art around the world. Their efforts were related to both the Cold War conflict with the Soviet Union and the general desire of sections of the artistic community in the United States to spread knowledge about modern American art. It was also in this period that New Zealand was in the process of shifting away from its traditional relationship with Great Britain and towards the United States as the guarantor of its security. As part of this, New Zealand and the United States were allies in two major conflicts, the ongoing Cold War and the Vietnam War.

### Parameters of the thesis

Throughout the thesis I have used the term “art” to refer primarily to the “fine” arts, particularly painting, and to a lesser extent sculpture, prints, drawings and photography. My primary focus is on interactions that involved formal structures, specifically government departments and agencies, art galleries and art museums, and a philanthropic organisation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY). This is not to deny the importance of personal interactions that sat outside these structures,

such as, for example, Don Driver's 1965 visit to the United States.<sup>1</sup> However, it was through formal structures that encounters and interactions accelerated in the mid-1950s and subsequently developed, and it was these that had the most wide-ranging impacts and related most directly to the contexts under investigation. For this reason, too, I will not be looking at the careers of Len Lye or Billy Apple, both artists who had been born in New Zealand but who developed their practice partly in New York in the period under investigation and had limited contact with New Zealand at this time.<sup>2</sup>

The thesis is not intended to be a comprehensive examination; even within the confines of formal structures I have uncovered more interactions than it is feasible to explore in detail. I will thus focus on encounters and interactions that relate to post-war American art as these were the most frequent and often had the greatest effect on artists. However, I devote limited attention to the specific formal impacts on New Zealand artists, as this has previously been considered in some depth by art historians. I also consider interactions from the United States that involved historical art and modernist European art where relevant. Because the former was utilised at times by the US information programme and the latter featured in several important shows sent out to New Zealand by MoMA's International Program, they provide valuable insights into the goals and operations of both these entities in New Zealand and, more broadly, Australasia. I also look at efforts from New Zealand to send exhibitions of New Zealand art to the United States, although these met with limited success. It is important to acknowledge that this also included examples of traditional Māori art and artefacts. However, although I mention these in passing where appropriate, I will not explore them in any detail as they have wider meanings and implications that lie beyond the scope of this thesis.

### Disciplinary frameworks

This thesis is firmly based within the history of New Zealand art, although it addresses a new angle. It looks at a period in which New Zealand artists were

---

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter Three, page 109, note 22.

<sup>2</sup> See Roger Horrocks, *Len Lye: A Biography* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2001); Christina Barton, *Billy Apple®: A Life in Parts* (Auckland: Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 2015).

increasingly exposed to overseas trends in art, and employed these in their practice. This is a topic that New Zealand art historians have examined, including the specific impacts of post-war American art trends on New Zealand artists. Such discussions have taken different forms and approaches, but have chiefly focused on formal relationships. One example is Michael Dunn's survey, *A Concise History of New Zealand Painting*, first published in 1991, which includes brief remarks on the influence of American styles and specific artists on various New Zealand artists. Dunn records, for example, how artists such as Toss Woollaston, Milan Mrkusich, Don Peebles and Philip Truettum employed aspects of Abstract Expressionism and notes the effect of the works of Robert Rauschenberg, Ellsworth Kelly and Kenneth Noland on Don Driver, and those of Helen Frankenthaler, Morris Louis, Kelly and Noland on Gretchen Albrecht.<sup>3</sup>

More focused approaches are offered by Tony Green and Francis Pound in their respective essays, "Modernism and Modernization" and "From Here: Reading and Misreading European, Russian and American Modernism." Both investigate the question of how New Zealanders responded to modernist art and both seek to move away from specific notions of influence. Green takes a wide perspective encompassing the 1930s through to the 1980s and, in doing so, looks to provide "an outline of a development of the modern by adoption and adaptation, first from Britain, second from the wider culture of the West," which he characterises as "not modernism but a continuous cultural updating, a catching up with the new, a modernization."<sup>4</sup> Pound examines some of the ways in which New Zealand painters from the 1950s to the 1970s deployed modernist art, and specifically "how international modernism was wilfully made different here."<sup>5</sup> Positioning New Zealand art more firmly within an international context is also an important feature of his 2009

---

<sup>3</sup> Michael Dunn, *A Concise History of New Zealand Painting* (Auckland: David Bateman, 1991). Other books employing a similar approach were Gil Docking, *Two Hundred Years of New Zealand Painting* (Melbourne: Lansdowne, 1971), and Elva Bett, *New Zealand Art: A Modern Perspective* (Auckland: Reed Methuen, 1986).

<sup>4</sup> Tony Green, "Modernism and Modernization," in *Headlands: Thinking through New Zealand Art*, ed. Mary Barr (Sydney: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1992), 148.

<sup>5</sup> Francis Pound, "From Here: Reading and Misreading European, Russian and American Modernism," in *New Zealand Modernism – In Context: Paintings from the Gibbs Collection*, ed. James Ross (New Zealand: The Gibbs Collection, 1995), 20.

publication *The Invention of New Zealand: Art and National Identity 1930-1970*.<sup>6</sup> In a similar fashion, in their recent monograph on Milan Mrkusich, Alan Wright and Edward Hanfling have scrutinised closely the artist's relationship to various American artists, moving beyond questions of influence to how Mrkusich interpreted and incorporated their artistic ideas, and made them his own.<sup>7</sup>

As part of these analyses, these authors have considered some of the mechanisms through which exposure to new art forms occurred, such as the importance of reproductions and art magazines. In addition, some have mentioned specific interactions with the United States. Generally this has been only in passing, but certain interactions have been discussed in more detail, particularly Colin McCahon's 1958 trip to the United States and the 1971 exhibition of Morris Louis paintings held at the ACAG. However, the primary focus of these discussions has, once again, been on formalist impacts. In terms of approach, the study closest to my own is Christina Barton's thesis on Post-Object art in New Zealand, which examines a particular period (1969-1979) and a particular movement, and is concerned with contextualising "the work within the parameters of a real social, political and cultural frame."<sup>8</sup> Notably, however, although she mentions the importance of the MoMA show *Some Recent American Art*, Barton does not examine its origins or political contexts in any detail.

More broadly, my thesis employs a social approach to the history of art. That is, it takes as its starting point the idea that art is not independent of the political, social, cultural, economic or institutional contexts in which it exists. T. J. Clark succinctly defined this approach in "On the Social History of Art," the introductory chapter to his book *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*. To Clark, art history should be concerned with "the complex relation of the artist to the total

---

<sup>6</sup> Francis Pound, *The Invention of New Zealand: Art and National Identity 1930-1970* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2009). See especially 224-44.

<sup>7</sup> Alan Wright and Edward Hanfling, *Mrkusich: The Art of Transformation* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Christina Barton, "Post-Object Art in New Zealand 1969-1979," vol. 1, "Experiments in Art and Life" (master's thesis, University of Auckland, 1987), iv.

historical situation, and in particular to the traditions of representation available to him.”<sup>9</sup> As Jonathan Harris subsequently argued:

The great value of Clark’s position is that, as a model or hypothesis, it can be applied, heuristically ‘tested out’, on many different historical conjunctures, in which the range of elements – individual artists, artworks, institutions, critics, institutional circumstances, etc. – may be combined and assessed in different kinds of configurations. No one can know in advance what the results of such possible empirical analyses might reveal. Although the principles underpinning the inquiry are stated and are clearly ‘perspectival’ (that is, related to certain interests and values – those of historical materialism), the process of research remains open and dependent upon how the ‘relation of elements’ within different conjunctures are identified and examined.<sup>10</sup>

By examining a relatively short period, from 1955 to 1974, and a specific relationship, that between New Zealand and the United States, my own study aims to show how art is informed by, and informs, other contexts and how broader processes affect the production, dissemination, reception and consumption of art.

In addition, given my particular concentration on the role of institutions as initiators, facilitators and sites of many of the interactions under investigation, I also draw upon ideas related to museum studies. In many cases, institutions defined what interactions took place and how these were presented. As Sharon MacDonald has argued,

Museums are socially and historically located; and, as such, they inevitably bear the imprint of social relations beyond their walls and beyond the present. Yet museums are never *just* spaces for the playing out of wider social relationships: a museum is a process as well as a structure, it is a creating agency as well as a ‘contested terrain’ (Lavine and Karp, 1990: 1). It is because museums have a formative as well as a reflective role in social relations that they are potentially of such influence.<sup>11</sup>

The museum institution, then, produces meaning; it is “the primary institutional locus where ‘art worth’ is proclaimed and the history of art materialized into public view.”<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> T. J. Clark, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), 12.

<sup>10</sup> Jonathan Harris, *The New Art History: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2001), 66-67.

<sup>11</sup> Sharon Macdonald, introduction to *Theorizing Museums: Representing Identity and Diversity in a Changing World*, ed. Sharon Macdonald and Gordon Fyfe (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 4.

<sup>12</sup> Sharon Macdonald, “Introduction to Part I,” in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon Macdonald (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 14.

In other words, the museum institution acts as an authority, as both mediator and arbiter of culture, although this authority is always contestable. As part of this, it is important to recognise that the understanding of art objects shifts depending on their context, and one of the key ways in which the museum institution produces meaning (which is of particular relevance to this thesis) is the medium of the exhibition. Exhibitions operate as a form of communication, framed by questions summed up in Ferguson's dictum: "Who speaks TO and FOR WHOM and UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS as well as WHERE and WHEN the particular utterance occurs are significant questions that can be asked of any communications performance."<sup>13</sup>

The thesis also relates to the broader question of the relationship between New Zealand and the United States in the period after World War II. This has been the subject of a great deal of inquiry by New Zealand scholars. The main focus of this has been on the political relationship between the two countries, and the basic outlines of this will be discussed throughout the thesis. The cultural relationship too has received some attention, although this has tended to look at the role and impact of American popular culture in New Zealand, generally defined in terms of films, music, television and comics. This issue came to the fore in the 1980s, partly because of growing academic interest from New Zealand in the relationship between the two countries in light of the disintegration of the ANZUS (Australia, New Zealand and the United States) Security Treaty following the New Zealand government's decision to no longer allow nuclear warships into its waters. For example, in the late 1980s, Geoff Lealand's book, *A Foreign Egg in our Nest? American Popular Culture in New Zealand* was published, and two edited collections of essays relating to the role of American culture in New Zealand.<sup>14</sup>

A key aspect of these discussions was the concept of cultural imperialism. Authors examined the extent to which popular cultural forms were imposed by the United States, whether they were attached to a specific agenda designed to promote US foreign policy and interests, and what kind of effect they had, particularly in relation

---

<sup>13</sup> Bruce W. Ferguson, "Exhibition Rhetorics: Material Speech and Utter Sense," in *Thinking about Exhibitions*, ed. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson and Sandy Nairne (London: Routledge, 1996), 183.

<sup>14</sup> These are Ann Trotter, ed., *New Zealand, Canada and the United States: The Papers of the Twenty-second Foreign Policy School 1987* (Dunedin: University of Otago, 1987); Malcolm McKinnon, ed., *The American Connection* (Wellington: Allen and Unwin, 1988).

to the anti-Americanism that existed in New Zealand at that time. There has, however, been little discussion of other forms of culture, including art. One exception is Bill Manhire's contribution on poetry, in which he argues that exposure to American poetry in the 1960s helped free New Zealand poets from the previously dominant British tradition.<sup>15</sup> Jock Phillips also gives some thought to high culture (as traditionally defined) in the context of whether American cultural products had had any effect on New Zealand foreign policy, although he writes,

I am not at all convinced that culture has anything to do with foreign policy, which always seem to have more to do with economic matters like the sale of butter fat or sheep meat than with movies or art exhibitions, but I think the connection worth exploring, if only because it is flattering to US cultural historians.<sup>16</sup>

My study argues that interactions undertaken from the United States were often related to US foreign policy aims, although it also demonstrates that this was only one aspect. With this in mind, the thesis also operates within the discourse around art as a form of cultural diplomacy, with a particular, although not exclusive, interest in the issue of the spread of modern American art around the globe, and its increasing international dominance after the Second World War. Since the 1970s, this has proved a contentious topic, with art historians criticising the distribution of American art around the world during the 1950s and 1960s as Cold War cultural propaganda.<sup>17</sup> There have, however, been challenges to this characterisation, focusing on the limitations of such arguments.<sup>18</sup> Part of the aim of this thesis, then, is to document the particular New Zealand experience, showing, through detailed reference to primary source material, the complexity of motivations and impacts of the interactions and encounters under investigation. Although it is important to recognise the asymmetric nature of the relationship and that the flow of interactions and their impact was

---

<sup>15</sup> Bill Manhire, "Breaking the Line: A View of American and New Zealand Poetry," in McKinnon, *The American Connection*, 94-108.

<sup>16</sup> Jock Phillips, "The Influence of American Culture on New Zealand since the Second World War," in Trotter, *New Zealand, Canada and the United States*, 28.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Max Kozloff, "American Painting during the Cold War," *Artforum* 11, no. 9 (May 1973): 43-54; Eva Cockroft, "Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War," *Artforum* 12, no. 10 (June 1974): 39-41.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Michael Kimmelman, "Revisiting the Revisionists: The Modern, Its Critics, and the Cold War," in *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-Century: At Home and Abroad* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1994), 38-55; Irving Sandler, "Abstract Expressionism and the Cold War," *Art in America* 96, no. 6 (June-July 2008): 65-74.

primarily one way, from the United States to New Zealand, this study also highlights the importance of New Zealand agency and the role of individuals, both of which make monolithic notions of US cultural imperialism untenable.

### Methodology and sources

The frameworks discussed above inform the ways in which interactions are examined in the thesis. Given their varying nature, there is no single standard methodology that can be employed to analyse all of them. However, in looking at the form and content of each interaction, I consistently consider the following issues to frame my discussion:

- Who initiated the interaction; its origins, development and underlying purposes and motivations;
- What form each interaction took and what ideas it was intended to convey;
- How each interaction was promoted, circulated and presented;
- How interactions were received and the impact that they had, both in terms of originating motivations, and in relation to the various ways that people regarded, interpreted and used the material or ideas presented.

Although the artworks on display are not my chief focus, I give some consideration to those in exhibitions of post-war American art that came to New Zealand. I briefly describe some examples from a formal standpoint in order to provide a better understanding of both the type of art that New Zealanders were exposed to, and their reception and impact at the time. While I acknowledge the limitations of an approach that imposes a fixed set of parameters, which may be overly simplistic and does a disservice to artists' individuality, the intent is to provide some sense of the art movements these works relate to, because it was on these terms that artworks tended to be presented and understood, and that critics sought to communicate information about them.

To provide the broader contextual backdrop to the thesis, I utilise a range of secondary sources related to the development of the artistic scene in New Zealand, the global spread of American art after World War II, the broader operations of certain



US institutions, and the political relationship between New Zealand and the United States. However, the majority of my information, particularly in relation to specific interactions, is derived from primary material held in governmental and institutional archives in New Zealand, the United States and Australia. For the many sources consulted in New Zealand, of most importance are the holdings of the E. H. McCormick Research Library at the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, the Auckland Council Archives, Archives New Zealand in Wellington and the New Plymouth District Council Archives. For the United States, the holdings of the US National Archives at College Park, Maryland, and those of various institutions including the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Museum of Modern Art, the Seattle Art Museum and the Michener Collection have proved of special value. Much of this material has not previously been examined from my particular standpoint. I have also consulted exhibition catalogues, articles and reviews in newspapers, magazines and journals, and undertaken discussions with artists, curators and critics from the period.

### Structure of the thesis

The thesis employs a primarily chronological approach in tracing the various interactions under investigation. Chapter One first provides a broader historical context, starting with a brief discussion of artistic contact between New Zealand and the United States prior to World War II, followed by a short synopsis of the development of the political relationship between the two countries after that conflict. I then discuss the key factors that led to the increase in art-related interactions between New Zealand and the United States from the mid-1950s, introducing some of the chief entities that played significant roles in the interactions explored throughout the thesis. Finally, I look at several important interactions that occurred in the period from 1955 to 1958, including the visits to New Zealand by Dr. Grace McCann Morley and Monroe Wheeler, director of the Department of Exhibitions and Publications at MoMA, and two exhibitions toured by the US information programme in New Zealand, with a particular focus on *Eight American Artists*, the first exhibition of original modernist American art to come to New Zealand.

Chapter Two examines the period 1958 to 1963 and the role of increasing New Zealand agency in art-related interactions with the United States. The institution central to this was the ACAG with Peter Tomory as its director. It was through the ACAG that the two interactions that are the focus of this chapter developed: Colin McCahon's 1958 visit to the United States, and the major international exhibition *Painting from the Pacific* that featured twenty-six paintings from the US West Coast and toured to the four main centres in New Zealand in 1961. In this period, the ACAG also organised two other exhibitions containing American art, and the visits of two other New Zealanders to the United States led to the first exhibition of contemporary American art to come to this country from MoMA.

Chapter Three opens with a brief discussion of the Vietnam War, a conflict that was central to the broader relationship between New Zealand and the United States for its duration, from 1964 to 1973. It then examines some of the changes to the arts infrastructure in New Zealand that facilitated the continued expansion of art-related interactions, particularly the establishment of first the Arts Advisory Council (AAC) and then the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council (QEIIAC). Following this, I consider the increase in individual encounters that took place from 1962, especially the trips to the United States by the artists and art educators John Coley and Jim Allen, in 1964 and 1968 respectively, and the 1968 visit to New Zealand by the important modernist art critic, Clement Greenberg. I also look in detail at the exhibition *Contemporary American Painting from the James A. Michener Collection* that came to New Zealand in 1965 and primarily featured recent art from the US East Coast, as well as the relationship that developed between New Zealand and MoMA's International Program, which led to that body touring four exhibitions to New Zealand in 1966 and 1967.

Chapters Four and Five both examine the period from 1969 to 1974. Chapter Four focuses on New Zealand initiatives, beginning with the first group exhibition of contemporary New Zealand art to tour to the United States, from 1970 to 1972. It then examines the continuing role of the QEIIAC, particularly in relation to individual interactions. Following this, I detail the efforts of the ACAG and the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery (GBAG) in New Plymouth in acquiring American art works and organising exhibitions from the United States, with special emphasis given to the

ACAG's *Morris Louis* show in 1971 and the GBAG's *The State of California Painting* that toured New Zealand in 1972. Chapter Five investigates initiatives from the United States, considering first the revival of the US information programme in art-related interactions. I then explore the continuing relationship with MoMA's International Program and how this changed. This body came to an important agreement with the ACAG in 1971 that led to five major exhibitions in that gallery through to 1976, as well as several smaller shows that toured the country. Finally, detailed attention is given to the exhibition *Some Recent American Art*, a major show featuring Minimalist and Conceptual art, displayed at the ACAG in 1974, and one of the most important exhibitions of American art to come to New Zealand.

## Chapter One: The Developing Relationship

Prior to World War II, contact between New Zealand and the United States was limited, but certainly not non-existent.<sup>19</sup> As part of this, there was some interest in American art in New Zealand and, moreover, the philanthropic organisation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, made some important contributions to the cultural life of New Zealand. As a result of the war, however, the relationship between the two countries became much closer, particularly in a political sense, and this would have implications for the acceleration of art-related interactions from the mid-1950s. This development was related first to the growing global prominence of American art in the post-war period. Two key factors in this were the Cold War with the Soviet Union, in which the US government's information programme utilised art as part of its propaganda strategy, and the desire of segments within the artistic community in the United States to spread knowledge about modern American art, based on a belief in its importance. From the New Zealand perspective, art-related interactions were facilitated by the improving cultural climate after the Second World War; improvements occurred in the arts infrastructure, the artistic scene developed and there was a growing interest in more modern forms of artistic expression. The first part of this chapter, then, will explore these various points in more detail and introduce some of the key entities that play important roles throughout this thesis, most notably the CCNY, the US information programme, the Museum of Modern Art's International Program and the Auckland City Art Gallery.

### New Zealand and the United States: artistic relations and exchange prior to World War II

In November 1880, the Dunedin artist William Mathew Hodgkins presented a paper entitled "A History of Landscape Art and its Study in New Zealand" at a meeting of the Otago Institute. Described by Peter Entwisle as "probably the first considered

---

<sup>19</sup> See M. P. Lissington, *New Zealand and the United States, 1840-1944* (Wellington: A. R. Shearer, 1972), 1-23.

statement of any length on the subject of New Zealand art,”<sup>20</sup> Hodgkins’s paper also spoke about, and praised, American art. This demonstrates that there was an interest in American art in New Zealand from a very early date, and that information about it was available. As Hodgkins stated,

I have for several years attentively watched the progress of art in America, and I have come to the conclusion that she had produced a race of landscape painters who are destined to build up a reputation of a most enduring kind.... I think that anyone who has paid the slightest attention to the numerous illustrated works which have of late years emanated from the American Press must admit that our ‘cousins’ are taking a very leading position in art.<sup>21</sup>

New Zealand artists would continue to show interest in what was happening in the United States; in the 1930s and 1940s artists such as Rita Angus and Russell Clark paid particular attention to the work of the American regionalist artists of the 1920s and 1930s,<sup>22</sup> and the idea was also expressed that this type of art could serve as a model for New Zealand artists.<sup>23</sup> Art-related interactions between New Zealand and the United States prior to the Second World War did, however, extend further than this, due primarily to the efforts of the CCNY.

The provision of philanthropic funds to New Zealand from the fortune amassed by Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919), the Scottish-born American steel magnate, has a long history. Carnegie had first provided money for the construction of libraries in New Zealand in 1902, and by 1916 eighteen Carnegie libraries had been established around the country.<sup>24</sup> In 1911 Carnegie established the CCNY as the primary philanthropic vehicle for the distribution of his wealth. Initially, the terms of this new body meant that its endowment could only be spent in the United States. Subsequently, however, Carnegie made amendments to its charter to allow for the disbursement of funds to

---

<sup>20</sup> Peter Entwisle, *William Mathew Hodgkins and His Circle* (Dunedin: Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 1984), 38. Hodgkins’s paper was printed in the *Otago Daily Times* (hereafter cited as *ODT*) on 20 November 1880.

<sup>21</sup> William Mathew Hodgkins, “A History of Landscape Art and its Study in New Zealand,” *ODT*, 20 November 1880, quoted in Entwisle, *William Mathew Hodgkins and His Circle*, 160. In particular, he referred to an illustrated series of three articles entitled “Fifty Years of American Art. 1828-1878” published by *Harper’s Magazine* in 1879.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Dunn, *New Zealand Painting: A Concise History*, 2nd ed. (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2003), 81-105.

<sup>23</sup> Pound, *The Invention of New Zealand*, 85-87.

<sup>24</sup> See Kerry Rodgers, “Carnegie’s Legacy,” *New Zealand Geographic* 76 (November/December 2005): 52-67.

the British dominions and colonies. Initially the focus of this was Canada, but from 1927 the CCNY began to expand its activities to New Zealand, Australia and South Africa.<sup>25</sup>

For New Zealand, the CCNY first sent out a number of specialists, primarily in the areas of adult education, libraries and the arts. This aligned with its US domestic operations and reflected its interest in cultural philanthropy that was advanced under Frederick Keppel, CCNY president from 1923 to 1941. The aim was to broaden access to “high” culture through the education of public taste and the professionalisation of the cultural sphere.<sup>26</sup> As a result, a range of important initiatives were developed, including some related to museums and art galleries.<sup>27</sup> Most notably, in 1933, a representative of the London-based Museums Association visited New Zealand as part of a wider Carnegie-backed study of museums and art galleries across the British colonies and dominions. The findings were published in a report,<sup>28</sup> and subsequently the CCNY set aside US\$50,000 (£10,000) for the development of New Zealand museums and galleries.<sup>29</sup> The bulk of this money was used to employ education officers at the four main metropolitan museums in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin, and to assist with the reconstruction of the Hawke’s Bay Museum and Art Gallery in Napier, which had been severely damaged by the 1931 earthquake.<sup>30</sup> However, funds were also allocated “to secure a representative collection of full-size reproductions of suitable pictures illustrating the various schools of painting from the earliest times to the present day.”<sup>31</sup> The goal was to provide New Zealanders with the opportunity to see examples of art that they would otherwise be unlikely to experience and give them access to a comprehensive history of the development of Western art. By 1942 over four hundred reproductions had

---

<sup>25</sup> See Stephen H. Stackpole, *Carnegie Corporation Commonwealth Program 1911-1961* (New York: Carnegie Corporation, 1963), 3-4 and 8-11 for further details.

<sup>26</sup> For a full discussion of the CCNY’s renewed focus on cultural philanthropy and the forms this took in the United States, see Ellen Lagemann, *The Politics of Knowledge: The Carnegie Corporation, Philanthropy, and Public Policy* (1989; repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 99-103.

<sup>27</sup> For a discussion of some other Carnegie initiatives in New Zealand, see C. E. Beeby, “The Influence of the Carnegie Corporation,” in McKinnon, *The American Connection*, 44-49.

<sup>28</sup> Sydney Frank Markham, Henry Caselli Richards and Walter Reginald Brook Oliver, *A Report on the Museums and Art Galleries of Australia and New Zealand* (London: The Museums Association, 1933).

<sup>29</sup> H. C. McQueen, *Education in New Zealand Museums: An Account of Experiments Assisted by the Carnegie Corporation of New York* (Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1942), 7.

<sup>30</sup> For a full list of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee to the CCNY, see *ibid.*, 7-8.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

been purchased, chiefly for the National Art Gallery in Wellington (NAG, now part of Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa).<sup>32</sup> From the 1930s, the CCNY also provided a range of individual grants to New Zealanders that enabled them to travel overseas for professional development, usually to the United States, but also Europe and Britain. Several museum professionals as well as people involved in the visual arts were recipients of these grants from 1934 to 1940.<sup>33</sup>

In the 1930s the CCNY also developed a scheme to subsidise the circulation of art exhibitions between Canada, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and the United States.<sup>34</sup> The first example was a show entitled *Exhibition of Contemporary Paintings by Artists of the United States* that the Corporation sent to Canada in 1934-35. The CCNY initially intended to send this on to South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, but subsequently decided not to. Instead it funded a tour of an exhibition of contemporary Canadian painting to these countries from 1936 to 1939. As a result of the success of this, the Art Galleries and Museums Association of Australia and New Zealand (an organisation established by the CCNY in 1936) proposed to Keppel that the CCNY tour a show of Australian and New Zealand art to the United States.<sup>35</sup> As this project developed, the New Zealand government decided that it wanted to send a separate New Zealand exhibition; the development and implications of this have recently been explored by Caroline Jordan and Rebecca Rice. As they argue, from a cultural point of view, “through the Corporation, the US was actively trying to move New Zealand out of its pre-war isolationism, embrace modernism, and reorient its artistic centre from Paris and London to New York.”<sup>36</sup> However, although the Australian exhibition, *Art of Australia 1788-1941*, opened in the United States on 2 October 1941, the New Zealand show did not go ahead. This was because, as it was being assembled, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, precipitating the entry of the

---

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 57. After 1940 some of the grant money was put aside so that the art galleries in Auckland, Christchurch and Dunedin could purchase their own collections of reproductions.

<sup>33</sup> For a list of recipients, see Brenda Jubin, *Program in the Arts 1911-1967* (New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1968), 70 and 74-75. Series VIII A 4 Box 3, Carnegie Corporation of New York Archives (hereafter cited as CCNY Archives).

<sup>34</sup> Caroline Jordan, “Cultural Exchange in the Midst of Chaos: Theodore Sizer’s Exhibition ‘Art of Australia 1788-1941,’” *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art* 13 (2013): 27.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>36</sup> Caroline Jordan and Rebecca Rice, “‘Cultural Propaganda’ and the Politics of Taste: The Carnegie Corporation’s Cancelled *Art of New Zealand* Exhibition, 1941,” *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art* 14, no. 2 (2014): 119.

United States into the Second World War and making it unfeasible to transport an art exhibition across the Pacific.

The CCNY had a range of motivations in its activities, but these were also embedded in the more general political realities of the time. As Katharina Rietzler explores in her article on American philanthropy between the world wars, organisations such as the CCNY acted with the tacit approval of the US government, supplementing official US foreign policy and advancing American interests through their operations.<sup>37</sup> Keppel himself spoke of the wider political value of the CCNY's contributions in New Zealand, Australia and South Africa following a tour to these countries in 1935. His main aim was to evaluate the Corporation's efforts in each country, and in an "Informal Report" that he prepared for the Trustees of the CCNY he also affirmed that the Corporation's involvement in these countries was especially vital in light of the increasingly troubled international climate of the 1930s. One of Keppel's key points was that the southern British dominions of Australia, New Zealand and South Africa were democracies and that "against dictatorships and communistic and totalitarian states, the liberal democracies today stand in contrast, regardless of the type of their government."<sup>38</sup> He also stated that the shared "Anglo-Saxon tradition" of these countries was significant as it meant there was "an essential unity of the spirit, an agreement as to what things are really worth while [*sic*] in life, what things are right and what are wrong."<sup>39</sup> Moreover, Keppel emphasised the importance of these countries in global strategic terms, noting that "through the accident of geographical location they complete... a girdle around the globe. I have confidence that as the years go on this essential unity and this geographical pattern will assume real importance in world affairs."<sup>40</sup>

However, political considerations did not just operate in one direction. As Jordan and Rice argue, the exhibitions of Australian and New Zealand art to the United States were supported by the Australian and New Zealand governments and intended as a form of cultural propaganda, "motivated by their desperate need to persuade the

---

<sup>37</sup> Katharina Rietzler, "Before the Cultural Cold Wars: American Philanthropy and Cultural Diplomacy in the Inter-war Years," *Historical Research* 84, no. 223 (February 2011): 148-64.

<sup>38</sup> Frederick P. Keppel, *Informal Report of the President on Visit to the Southern British Dominions, January-June, 1935* (New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1935), 36.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*



US to enter the war in the face of the escalating regional threat in the Pacific.”<sup>41</sup> As a result, the New Zealand exhibition, although aborted, is an important precursor to my own study. It represents an early effort to shift artistic focus to the United States and shows both the importance of political factors and local initiative and agency in art-related interactions.

### New Zealand and the United States: political relations from World War II to 1954

As a result of World War, the relationship between the two countries became much closer, particularly in a political sense, and this would have implications for the acceleration of art-related interactions from the mid-1950s. Following the Japanese assault on Pearl Harbor, New Zealand and the United States became allies in the war against the Axis powers and official diplomatic relations were established the following year. On 16 February 1942 Walter Nash, Peter Fraser’s deputy prime minister, presented his credentials to President Roosevelt as New Zealand’s resident minister to the United States, and on 1 April 1942 a US legation was opened in Wellington. Notably, this was New Zealand’s first diplomatic relationship with a foreign power. By this point it was also clear that the security of New Zealand (and Australia) was dependent on the United States as the British naval base at Singapore had fallen to the Japanese on 15 February 1942.<sup>42</sup> One consequence was an agreement that an American division would be sent to New Zealand. From May 1942 US troops began to arrive in the country, which subsequently became an important base for the United States in the Pacific. It would maintain a substantial presence until the middle of 1944. In total, about 100,000 Americans came to New Zealand over this period, primarily based around Auckland and Wellington, an influx that came to be known as “the American Invasion.”<sup>43</sup> This was also noteworthy for the social interaction and greater mutual awareness that it facilitated between the two countries: elements of American culture, which “would provide fertile soil for the increasing spread of

---

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 121. See also Jordan, “Cultural Exchange in the Midst of Chaos,” 28-29.

<sup>42</sup> Malcolm McKinnon, *Independence and Foreign Policy: New Zealand in the World since 1935* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1993), 44.

<sup>43</sup> This is recognised as a significant event in New Zealand history. See, for example, Jock Phillips and Ellen Ellis, *Brief Encounter: American Forces and the New Zealand People, 1942-1945: An Illustrated Essay* (Wellington: Historical Publications Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1992); Nancy M. Taylor, *The New Zealand People at War: The Home Front*, vol. 1 (Wellington: Historical Publications Branch, Department of Internal Affairs), 621-61.

American popular culture in the next generation,”<sup>44</sup> now became familiar to New Zealanders.

The conclusion of the Second World War was shortly followed by the development of another global conflict, the Cold War, as the wartime alliance between the Western powers and the Soviet Union broke down. For the United States, the Cold War would become the dominant paradigm through which it viewed the world and which informed all its foreign relations. The initial focus of this new conflict was on Europe, but several events occurred from 1949 that would shift US attention towards the Asia-Pacific region. In October that year the Nationalist Chinese government of Chiang Kai-shek (which had been propped up by the United States) was overthrown by the Communists led by Mao Zedong. Then, in June 1950, Communist North Korea invaded South Korea, and in November the new government in China intervened in support of the North, resulting in the Korean War, which was to last until 1953. Although fought under a United Nations mandate, this was primarily a US initiative.

For New Zealand, its main fear in the immediate aftermath of World War II was the potential threat of a resurgent Japan, and the political consensus was that the best guarantee against this was a substantial US presence in the Pacific, particularly as the events of the war had shown that British support could not necessarily be relied upon. Although anxiety over Japan soon receded, it became the aim of successive New Zealand governments to obtain a formalised agreement with the United States designed to guarantee the country’s safety. In terms of the Cold War, as the situation in Europe deteriorated, New Zealand aligned itself with Britain and the United States as part of the “Western Alliance” against the Soviet Union. For the United States, it would come to view New Zealand as “a minor but useful Cold War ally which required modest attention and encouragement.”<sup>45</sup> Indeed, the growing political closeness between the two countries was demonstrated in December 1948 when the respective legations of each country were upgraded to embassy status. And, although the United States steered away from a formal alliance with New Zealand in the initial phase of the Cold War, this changed as a result of its shifting focus to the Asia-Pacific

---

<sup>44</sup> Phillips and Ellis, *Brief Encounter*, 68.

<sup>45</sup> Roberto Rabel, “New Zealand and the United States in the Early Cold War Era, 1945-49,” *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 7, no. 2 (December 1988): 4. Rabel’s conclusion is based on an analysis of several State Department policy statements regarding New Zealand.

region from 1949. Significantly, the new National government in New Zealand followed the lead of the United States rather than Britain in not recognising the new Communist regime in China, a move that did not go unnoticed in the United States.<sup>46</sup> New Zealand also entered the Korean War, a conflict that the government viewed in Cold War terms. Although its commitment of ships and then troops was based on British involvement, it also understood that providing material support would put New Zealand in a better position with regard to its relationship with the United States (and that not doing so would jeopardise it).<sup>47</sup>

The United States now became more inclined to look towards allies in the Asia-Pacific region and consequently finalised a peace treaty with Japan with the aim of allowing it to rebuild and become a strong ally against Communism.<sup>48</sup> For New Zealand and Australia this reignited fears over the potential for Japanese aggression, but it also provided them with an opportunity to insist on a security guarantee from the Americans in exchange for supporting such a treaty. The result was the ANZUS Security Treaty, signed in September 1951.<sup>49</sup> Subsequently, in 1954, New Zealand entered into a second security arrangement with the United States, South East Asia Treaty Organisation, that also included Great Britain, France, Australia, Pakistan, the Philippines and Thailand. This was a US initiative designed specifically as a means of resisting Communist aggression in Southeast Asia.<sup>50</sup>

### **The US Information Programme, Art and New Zealand**

In the first part of the twentieth century, the US government had trailed other major powers in developing mechanisms to project its interests overseas. However, as the international situation deteriorated in the 1930s, President Franklin Roosevelt took

---

<sup>46</sup> Ann Trotter, *New Zealand and Japan 1945-1952: The Occupation and the Peace Treaty* (London: Athlone Press, 1990), 114-16.

<sup>47</sup> For a full discussion, see Ian McGibbon, "New Zealand's Intervention in the Korean War, June-July 1950," *International History Review* 11, no. 2 (May, 1989): 277-88.

<sup>48</sup> This was signed on 8 September 1951 and came into force on 28 April 1952.

<sup>49</sup> For a full discussion of the background to ANZUS, see David W. McIntyre, *Background to the ANZUS Pact: Policy-Making, Strategy and Diplomacy, 1945-55* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 1995).

<sup>50</sup> McKinnon, *Independence and Foreign Policy*, 125.

steps to address this lack of a propaganda apparatus.<sup>51</sup> The initial concern was with South America, in response to fears over the increasing influence of the Axis powers in that region, and art and culture played a significant part within these early operations.<sup>52</sup> Following the advent of war in Europe in 1939, Roosevelt expanded US propaganda actions. Most notably, in 1940 he created the Office for the Coordination of Commercial and Cultural Relations between the American Republics following a proposal by Nelson Rockefeller. Headed by Rockefeller, this extended American communications through South America, supplying news, promoting exchanges and instigating a wide-ranging cultural programme. This included art exhibits, radio broadcasts, orchestral visits and lectures, and was facilitated by an expanding network of cultural centres in various South American cities.<sup>53</sup> After the United States entered the war, Roosevelt created the Office of War Information in June 1942 as the main coordinator of US wartime propaganda.<sup>54</sup>

In New Zealand, a branch of the Office of War Information was soon established at the US legation in Wellington. Its main activity initially consisted of supplying news and information to the legation for distribution, but in 1944 it began to expand, appointing a representative and it opened a US Information Library. The library, which was well-used from its inception,<sup>55</sup> carried books on art and subscribed to several American art periodicals, some of which featured reproductions of avant-garde art. At the time this represented a rare opportunity for New Zealanders to learn about such art, and one of the users of this early resource was a young Gordon Walters.<sup>56</sup> In 1945 the legation also received two collections of reproductions of American paintings intended for distribution and display, although it is unclear where,

---

<sup>51</sup> See Nicholas Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 10-11.

<sup>52</sup> See Frank A. Ninkovich, *The Diplomacy of Ideas: U.S. Foreign Policy and Cultural Relations, 1938-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 24-34.

<sup>53</sup> For a full discussion of the Office for the Coordination of Commercial and Cultural Relations between the American Republics, see *ibid.*, 35-49.

<sup>54</sup> For further details on the OWI and its operations see Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 15-21.

<sup>55</sup> A memorandum dated 2 April 1946 from Mary Parsons, director of the Information Library, to Mr. Seibert, US State Department, related that it “has always been used intensively by government officials, writers, broadcasters, journalists, business and industrial people and many others.” Wellington legation General Records, 1946: Part II, 830-842, Box 69, General Records, 1941-1961; Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Record Group 84 (RG84); National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD (hereafter cited as NACP).

<sup>56</sup> See Pound, *The Invention of New Zealand*, 247.

or even if, these were exhibited.<sup>57</sup> These endeavours were related to the increasing use of culture, and art, by the US propaganda apparatus as World War II drew to a close.<sup>58</sup> However, following the conclusion of the conflict, the US information programme suffered a variety of setbacks under President Truman.<sup>59</sup> First, he shut down the Office of War Information and folded its operations, including responsibility for overseas posts, into the State Department. Budget cuts followed, one result of which was the termination of the information programme in New Zealand, including its library, in July 1947. However, the programme, minus the library, would soon be reinstated, after New Zealand became the fifth signatory to the Fulbright exchange programme, in September 1948.

### *Advancing American Art*

In the same period, the state-sponsored display of American art abroad received a major blow that would have repercussions for years to come. In 1946, as part of a general effort to utilise art to project a positive image of the United States and its culture overseas, the State Department had funded the purchase of a collection of modern American art. This was intended for display in two separate exhibitions in South America and Europe under the moniker *Advancing American Art*.<sup>60</sup> However, before these were sent overseas, the collection was displayed at the Metropolitan Museum in New York where it was soon attacked by conservative elements in the press. Concerns were raised over the left-wing political views of many of the artists and the ability of modern art to reflect American values. The result was that the collection came under congressional scrutiny and the exhibitions, which were already on display overseas, were recalled and the paintings sold. This controversy did not die down quickly, and in the late 1940s and into the 1950s attacks on modern art continued. The most virulent and high profile of these came from a Republican

---

<sup>57</sup> These were mentioned in a letter from Prescott Childs, first secretary of the US legation, Wellington, to John R. Minter, charge d'affaires ad interim at the US legation, Canberra, 11 March 1946, Wellington legation General Records, 1946: Part II, 830-842, Box 69, General Records 1941-1961, RG84, NACP.

<sup>58</sup> Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 19.

<sup>59</sup> For details of the US information programme under Truman, see *ibid.*, 22-80.

<sup>60</sup> Much has been written about *Advancing American Art*. See, for example, Taylor D. Littleton and Maltby Sykes, *Advancing American Art: Paintings, Politics and Cultural Confrontation at Mid-Century*, 2nd ed. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005); Michael Krenn, *Fall-out Shelters for the Human Spirit* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 26-49.

congressman from Michigan, George Dondero who, in 1949, made two speeches attacking modern art to the House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, entitled “Communists Maneuver to Control Art in the United States” and “Modern Art Shackled to Communism.”<sup>61</sup>

### The reinstatement of the US information programme in New Zealand

The information programme in New Zealand was initially reinstated under the designation United States International Information and Educational Exchange Program (USIE). Although the Fulbright programme had offered the immediate reason for its restoration, the centrality of the Cold War to its actions and activities was soon spelt out in a draft Country Paper sent in May 1950, which stated,

the objectives of the USIE program in New Zealand are to clarify the regional aims and global policies of the United States Government in order to further understanding and cooperation and in addition to insure a bulwark against Communism in the Pacific.<sup>62</sup>

The main focus at this stage was on the spread of information, although the report did mention cultural activities and the hope that these would be expanded. As part of this, in 1950 the USIE facilitated, through the State Department, the loan of two Winslow Homer paintings from the Metropolitan Museum in New York for an international art exhibition in Christchurch as part of the Canterbury Centennial celebrations. That these were representational works by an acknowledged American master made this uncontroversial. It should be noted, too, that the loan was a result of a request for assistance from the Canterbury Centennial Committee, signalling the importance from an early stage of New Zealand agency to interactions. This loan demonstrated to the USIE the potential value of more art-related activities, which it expressed to Washington in the following statement:

This is a cultural activity in which much could be done in New Zealand. The country is intensely ‘art-minded’.... If the Department at any future time feels

---

<sup>61</sup> See William Hauptman, “The Suppression of Art in the McCarthy Decade,” *Artforum* 12, no. 4 (October 1973): 48-52.

<sup>62</sup> US embassy, Wellington to the Department of State, “USIE Draft Country Paper,” 29 May 1950, 1, 511.44/1-50, Box 2361, Central Decimal Files 1950-54; General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59 (RG59); NACP.

in a position to sponsor and finance exhibitions of American art abroad, USIE Wellington will be intensely interested in organizing and arranging an exhibit through its close connections with officers of the N.Z. Academy of Fine Arts.<sup>63</sup>

The desire for more cultural activities was reinforced by growing concerns over anti-Americanism in New Zealand in the early 1950s. US officials in New Zealand believed that cultural displays could play a role in countering the idea that Americans were primarily materialistic in outlook, and New Zealand perceptions of US culture that focused on the potentially harmful influence of American movies, music and comics. An evaluation report sent in September 1952 by the post in Wellington, now under the standard designation United States Information Service (USIS), noted there had been “a disturbing deterioration of public opinion sympathetic to the United States and its aims.”<sup>64</sup> As a way to counter such views, it put forward that one of its four main priorities would be to “make available to the New Zealand public a far greater quantity of superior cultural material.”<sup>65</sup> However, due to the continuing fallout from the *Advancing American Art* controversy, the potential for art, and especially modern art, to be part of this was still limited, although the State Department was in the process of reintegrating it back into the information programme. In doing so, it sought to minimise domestic publicity and to avoid direct involvement, preferring instead to work through outside agents. In New Zealand, this was demonstrated by an exhibition of art panels that was sent to the USIS in Wellington in 1953 by the Container Corporation of America.<sup>66</sup> These showed examples of Container Corporation advertisements commissioned from modernist artists, an early example of the display of modernist design in New Zealand.<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup> US embassy, Wellington to the Department of State, “USIE Semi-Annual Evaluation Report, December 1949-May 1950,” 26 September 1950, 26-27, *ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> US embassy, Wellington to the Department of State, “USIS Evaluation Report for December 1951-May 1952,” 2 September 1952, [1], *ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, [12].

<sup>66</sup> US embassy, Wellington to the Department of State, “USIS Semi-Annual Evaluation Report, December-May 1953,” 29 July 1953, 25, Folder 2 [no name], Box 2361, Central Decimal Files 1950-54, RG59, NACP.

<sup>67</sup> For a discussion of the Container Corporation of and its use of modernist design in advertising, see Neil Harris and Martina Roudabush Norelli, *Art, Design and the Modern Corporation: The Collection of Container Corporation of America, a Gift to the National Museum of American Art* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1985).

## The United States Information Agency<sup>68</sup>

The position of the US information programme as a whole, and the role of art within it, would shortly improve as a result of changes instigated by Dwight Eisenhower, who had become president in 1953. This would have positive implications for the use of art by the USIS in New Zealand, and ushered in the period of its greatest impact. Eisenhower was a firm believer in the value of propaganda and under his leadership it became a central part of the US Cold War strategy. He recognised that it was crucial for the United States to promote its interests and communicate its point of view to foreign publics. Overt US propaganda was now to be based on disseminating positive messages about the United States, focusing on American values, achievements and culture. To realise this, Eisenhower created the United States Information Agency (USIA) on 1 August, 1953, described as “the biggest information and cultural effort ever mounted by one society to influence the attitudes and actions of men and women beyond its borders.”<sup>69</sup> The USIA took over responsibility for the USIS branches around the world, and the new agency became involved in facilitating art exhibitions and providing better mechanisms for their distribution and funding.

## The American art community and the desire to send American art abroad

The American art community had, in general, welcomed government involvement in the promotion of the arts from the late 1930s. On the one hand, there was recognition that this provided opportunities to show American art to an international audience, but it was also tied to an idealistic vision of art as a civilising force and a way to promote understanding between nations.<sup>70</sup> For example, in 1944, James Thrall Soby, the director of the Department of Painting and Sculpture at MoMA, stated that “art was international” and that his institution was “aware of the desperate need for recognizing the arts as vehicles of that international communication and understanding on which the future of everyone depends.”<sup>71</sup> Similarly, when the State Department called together an Advisory Committee on Art in February 1945 to

---

<sup>68</sup> For a full discussion of the origins and early operation of the United States Information Agency, see Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 81-133.

<sup>69</sup> Wilson P. Dizard Jr., *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the U.S. Information Agency* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 4.

<sup>70</sup> See Krenn, *Fall-out Shelters from the Human Spirit*, 9-14.

<sup>71</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 12.



discuss the role that American art should play in post-war US foreign policy, museum directors expressed their desire for the US government to become more involved in its promotion, and to expand exchanges, particularly to Europe.<sup>72</sup>

As noted, the controversy over *Advancing American Art* had been a major setback, but members of the American art community soon stepped in to not only defend modern art against attacks by the likes of George Dondero, but to also advocate for the continued use of art by the US government as part of its information programme.<sup>73</sup> They framed their arguments in Cold War terms, making the case that art could be used to promote greater understanding of the United States and to counter Soviet charges of American cultural barbarism and materialism. Consequently, they stressed that modern art was not Communist by nature, but “was instead a symbol of American creativity, individualism and freedom of expression.”<sup>74</sup> They also made the connection between conservative condemnations of modern art and the rejection of such art by the Soviets themselves.<sup>75</sup> Different individuals and groups lobbied the government directly to become more involved in the provision of art, and there were continuing calls for greater government involvement in the cultural arena. For example, in 1950, the *Magazine of Art* published a “Symposium on Government and Art” in its November issue, in which MoMA’s Soby stated, “in this deadly era of the Cold War, it is of vital importance that we should mobilize our cultural assets to promote a better international understanding of what we are really about as a nation.”<sup>76</sup> These arguments did not fall on deaf ears for, as noted, there remained elements within the State Department that still recognised the potential value of art as a form of cultural diplomacy. As a result, art was gradually reintegrated into the information programme.

At the same time, other institutions became involved in developing their own mechanisms for the display of art abroad. In September 1951, the Smithsonian

---

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 19-21.

<sup>73</sup> For a full discussion see *ibid.*, 50-74.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>75</sup> A key example of this argument is an article by Alfred Barr of MoMA entitled “Is Modern Art Communistic?,” *New York Sunday Times Magazine*, 14 December 1952. Cited in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, eds., *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, new ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 670-73.

<sup>76</sup> Quoted in Krenn, *Fall-out Shelters from the Human Spirit*, 54.

Institution established its Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) with private funds and a State Department grant, with the purpose of touring exhibitions both domestically and internationally. It sent out its first exhibitions in June 1952, but, as Michael Krenn notes, it “generally steered clear of controversial art exhibits and focused instead on crafts, architecture, and older art forms.”<sup>77</sup> However, the most notable development in this area was MoMA’s decision to establish an International Program. This would play a significant role in spreading knowledge about modern American art, including to New Zealand in the period I am investigating.<sup>78</sup>

From its foundation, MoMA had had an international focus: in 1938 it sent its first exhibition overseas following an invitation from the French government, and during the 1940s it had continued to send shows overseas at the request of the US government. As noted, MoMA officials such as Soby and Alfred Barr had defended modern art against continuing attacks in the wake of the *Advancing American Art* debacle. There was also a feeling that the US government should be utilising art, and particularly modern art, more effectively as part of its overall Cold War strategy. Partly as a result of this, following a five-year grant from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, MoMA established its International Program to send exhibitions overseas. The three men primarily responsible for developing the Program were Nelson Rockefeller, president of MoMA’s Board of Trustees and treasurer of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Rene D’Harnoncourt, director of MoMA, and Porter McCray, the head of MoMA’s Department of Circulating Exhibitions, who was put in charge of the new initiative. D’Harnoncourt and McCray had worked with Rockefeller in his Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs during World War II, and all three shared a common belief in cultural exchange, the value of modern art, and its ability to counter negative impressions of the United States. They also hoped that this initiative would encourage the government to develop a similar programme. The formation of the International Program was followed a year later by the creation of MoMA’s International Council, the purpose of which was, in part, to raise funds to ensure the continuance of international exhibitions. Through the 1950s, both the activities of the

---

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>78</sup> Helen M. Franc provides a detailed discussion of the origins of the International Program and its early operations and is the key source for the information offered here. Franc, “The Early Years of the International Program and Council,” in *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-Century*, 109-149.

International Program and the specific role of the International Council would grow considerably.

### **The Improving Cultural Climate in New Zealand**

From the New Zealand perspective, art-related interactions were facilitated by the improving cultural climate after the Second World War. The conclusion of this conflict had provided an opportunity for New Zealand society to reassess and refocus its priorities as part of a broader desire to move on from the trauma of war. One aspect of this was a desire for greater cultural engagement. This was firstly manifested in several improvements to the cultural infrastructure initiated by Peter Fraser's Labour government. One example was the creation of the National Council of Adult Education in 1947, whose key function was "to promote and foster adult education and the cultivation of the arts."<sup>79</sup> As part of this, four Regional Councils were created and put under control of the universities in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin. Within each region, an important vehicle to meet the Council's goals was the Community Arts Service (CAS), an organisation originally founded in Auckland in 1946 to bring the arts, in the form of music, drama, ballet and art exhibitions, to the rural and suburban areas of that region.<sup>80</sup> The CAS was subsequently incorporated into the Regional Councils for Adult Education, and each district now undertook its own CAS programme. The value of these developments would later be recognised by the US information programme. One USIS report described the National Adult Education Council and its regional tutors as "one of our most effective channels, especially in the art and cultural fields."<sup>81</sup> In addition, the CAS played an important role in the distribution of several exhibitions of American art.

---

<sup>79</sup> *Adult Education Act 1947* s 9, accessed 20 April 2015, [http://www.nzlii.org/nz/legis/hist\\_act/aea194711gv1947n43237/](http://www.nzlii.org/nz/legis/hist_act/aea194711gv1947n43237/).

<sup>80</sup> For details of its early operations, see J. F. McDougall, "Community Arts Service: The First Year of Work," in *Year Book of the Arts in New Zealand No. 3: 1947*, ed. Howard Wadman (Wellington: Tombs, 1947), 125-27.

<sup>81</sup> US embassy, Wellington to the Department of State, "USIS Semi-Annual Evaluation Report, December-May 1953," 29 July 1953, 10, Folder 2 [no name], Box 2361, Central Decimal Files 1950-54, RG59, NACP.

In 1947, too, the Art Galleries and Museums Association of New Zealand (AGMANZ) was formed, to enable institutions to discuss ideas, coordinate policy and work to improve professional standards. From its inception it also looked for ways to extend New Zealand's cultural connection with the rest of the world. At this stage it was primarily a forum for museums; the only art galleries that were founding members were the ACAG, the Sarjeant Gallery in Wanganui and the Hawke's Bay Museum and Gallery. Other organisations were, however, involved in seeking out art shows from abroad. For example, in 1948 the Auckland Society of Arts organised an exhibition of recent Australian art that was displayed at the ACAG,<sup>82</sup> and the Empire Art Loan Exhibitions Society, originally formed in 1932, was restarted. This coordinated three exhibitions on the history of British watercolours to New Zealand between 1949 and 1955.<sup>83</sup>

There was also a growing interest in, and exposure to, modern art. In the first place, the Second World War had led to the arrival in New Zealand of a small number of Europeans who had experience and understanding of European modernism and transmitted this to elements of the local populace. A key figure here was Imric Porsolt, an architect and architectural historian, who was born in Czechoslovakia and emigrated to Auckland in 1939. Porsolt lectured at the University of Auckland's School of Architecture and became an important writer on the visual arts, contributing to *Home and Building* magazine, the *New Zealand Herald*, *Landfall* and the *Auckland Star*.<sup>84</sup> Of even greater value was the influx of art books and magazines into the country.<sup>85</sup> As discussed, the establishment of the US Information Library in Wellington had played a role in this, and in the immediate post-war years the US information programme would be an important outlet for the distribution of art books. Moreover, as Francis Pound notes,

---

<sup>82</sup> See Ronald Tizard, *The Auckland Society of Arts, 1870-1970: A Centennial History* (Auckland: 1972), 41.

<sup>83</sup> Gordon H. Brown, *New Zealand Painting 1940-1960: Conformity and Dissension* (Wellington: Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand, 1981), 35.

<sup>84</sup> For further details on Porsolt and the impact of European émigrés on the visual arts in New Zealand, see Leonard Bell, "Border Crossings: The Visual Arts," in *Jewish Lives in New Zealand: A History*, ed. Leonard Bell and Diana Morrow (Auckland: Godwit, 2012), 50-105.

<sup>85</sup> See, Gordon H. Brown, "The Pursuit of Modernism in the 1940s and Early 1950s 2," *Art New Zealand* 31 (Winter 1984): 50-54.

by the 1950s, the large-format American magazine *Art News* had replaced the English *Studio* as the New Zealand artist's main source of the overseas new. It reflected, with a hitherto unimaginable immediacy, the very latest in modernist culture, fresh from its latest centre, New York.<sup>86</sup>

Other developments that facilitated the exploration of modern forms of expression included the growth in art groups, the creation of new venues for the display of art and the establishment of new forums for discussion. After the conclusion of the Second World War, there was a revitalisation of art groups such as the Rutland Group in Auckland and The Group in Christchurch in the 1940s, and others were formed, such as the New Group and the Thornhill Group.<sup>87</sup> Public libraries now became involved in exhibitions, and privately owned venues also held shows.<sup>88</sup> In 1948 the Helen Hitchings Gallery opened in Wellington, which, although it closed in 1951, provided an important space for new art during this time and set a precedent for similar ventures.<sup>89</sup> Also in Wellington, the Architectural Centre, founded in 1946 by a group of young architects interested in art, put on exhibitions, and from 1953 to 1968 ran the Centre Gallery. In 1952 the Visual Arts Association was established in Dunedin, "aimed at improving the quality of design and artistic taste generally," which displayed exhibitions (including some rejected by the DPAG), either in the Dunedin Public Library or the foyer of the Otago Museum.<sup>90</sup>

Another major development was the foundation, in 1947, of the quarterly literary journal *Landfall* by Charles Brasch.<sup>91</sup> The creation of *Landfall* was a major cultural moment; as John Geraets states, "*Landfall* under Brasch's editorship [did] more than any other journal or cultural body during the post-war years to promote and give recognition to the arts in New Zealand."<sup>92</sup> For a time it had a companion in the *Year Book of the Arts* in New Zealand that ran from 1945 to 1951; both featured reviews of art shows, articles on artists and reproductions, and provided an important place for analysis, discussion and criticism. In addition, the architectural magazine *Home and*

---

<sup>86</sup> Pound, *The Invention of New Zealand*, 247-48.

<sup>87</sup> See Brown, *New Zealand Painting 1940-1960*, 45-49.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 49-50.

<sup>89</sup> For a contemporary discussion of the Helen Hitchings gallery see Janet Paul, "The Helen Hitchings Gallery in Wellington," *Landfall* 3, no. 4 (December 1949): 357-59.

<sup>90</sup> Brown, *New Zealand Painting 1940-1960*, 49.

<sup>91</sup> Brasch would become one of New Zealand's most significant cultural figures. He was also a writer and poet as well as a patron and collector of New Zealand art.

<sup>92</sup> John Geraets, "Charles Brasch's *Landfall*: A Second Life," in *Enduring Legacy: Charles Brasch, Patron, Poet & Collector*, ed. Donald Kerr (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2003), 129-30.

*Building*, which had existed since 1936 (initially under the moniker *Building Today*), published its first review of an art exhibition in its August-September 1948 issue, and from 1949 it incorporated a specific “Arts” section.

In the 1940s the two artists in New Zealand who engaged most fully with modernist art were Gordon Walters and Milan Mrkusich, but this was chiefly European modernism. In the 1940s Walters had sought out magazines and books on modern art in New Zealand, and when he went to Australia in 1946 he purchased a range of art books, including publications from MoMA.<sup>93</sup> Travelling in Britain and Europe in 1950, he was able to see many examples of European modernist art, and also visited a show of contemporary American painting at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.<sup>94</sup> Walters returned to Australia in 1951 and began experimenting with geometric abstractions, which he continued with when he returned to New Zealand in 1953. Mrkusich too showed a particular interest in modernism. Apprenticed at a film and photography company from 1942, he did not attend art school. Instead, a key moment in his development was his introduction to the magazine *Arts and Architecture*, which had articles and illustrations on contemporary architecture and design.<sup>95</sup> Subsequently, Mrkusich’s first solo exhibition at the University of Auckland’s School of Architecture in 1949 featured non-objective paintings.<sup>96</sup> Although it would be some time before the abstraction of Mrkusich and Walters was accepted in New Zealand, other artists also began to look towards European styles, particularly Cubism. Colin McCahon was one such artist, as was Louise Henderson, who studied under the Cubist painter Jean Metzinger in Paris in 1952. Significantly, in 1954 the ACAG held a show entitled *Object and Image* that focused on abstract, semi-abstract and Cubist-inflected works by seven New Zealand artists including McCahon, Henderson, Mrkusich and John Weeks.<sup>97</sup>

In a general sense, however, at this point, artists and the art-going public in New Zealand had had little exposure to, or understanding of the range of artistic styles that had developed in Europe from the late nineteenth through the twentieth century.

---

<sup>93</sup> Pound, *The Invention of New Zealand*, 246-47.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 254.

<sup>95</sup> Wright and Hanfling, *Mrkusich*, 3.

<sup>96</sup> See *ibid.*, 11-13.

<sup>97</sup> See Brown, *New Zealand Painting 1940-1960*, 54.

Moreover, engagement with recent trends coming out of the United States, such as Abstract Expressionism, was almost non-existent. A major issue was the lack of access to first-hand examples. This would begin to change in the latter half of the 1950s, and central to this were developments at the ACAG that would make it the most proactive and progressive art gallery in the country in the 1950s and 1960s.

### The Auckland City Art Gallery

The key moment in the development of the ACAG was the announcement by the Auckland City Council (ACC) in July 1951 that it intended to hire a full-time professional director to manage the ACAG. This followed the decision of John Barr, city librarian from 1913 who had been responsible for running the ACAG, to retire.<sup>98</sup> Moreover, the Council was fortunate to be able to appoint as the first two directors Eric Westbrook and Peter Tomory, both of whom were dynamic professionals with an international perspective and an interest in modern art.<sup>99</sup> Also crucial was that the ACC gave these men control over policy and supported them with adequate funding for building improvements, acquisitions and the employment of a small but dedicated staff.

Eric Westbrook was a thirty-six-year-old Englishman whose previous roles included chief exhibition officer for the British Council and director of the Wakefield Art Gallery in Yorkshire. His appointment was announced in January 1952 and the ACC showed its commitment to improving the ACAG by paying for Westbrook to visit art museums in the United States prior to taking up the position.<sup>100</sup> He began his new role in April 1952, leaving in December 1955 to assume the position of director of the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) in Melbourne. On his arrival in Auckland, Westbrook quickly recognised that the most pressing concern was to attract people to the ACAG. He thus worked to publicise the gallery, discussing art on radio

---

<sup>98</sup> Since its opening in 1888, the ACAG had been run by the city librarian (the library and art gallery shared the same building on Wellesley Street).

<sup>99</sup> Maria E. Brown examined the tenures of both Westbrook and Tomory in her thesis “The History and Function of the Auckland City Art Gallery in Constructing a Canon of Modernist New Zealand Art” (master’s thesis, University of Auckland, 1999). Courtney Johnston has also examined Tomory’s time in charge of the ACAG in her thesis “Peter Tomory: The New Zealand Years, 1956-1968” (master’s thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2004).

<sup>100</sup> “Plans for Art Gallery,” *New Zealand Herald* (hereafter cited as *NZH*), 11 January 1952.

programmes and in lectures, talks and press releases. These were often aimed at changing public attitudes to contemporary art, particularly abstraction. Securing funding from the ACC, he improved the infrastructure of the building, making it a more attractive space better suited to the display of art. He also developed coherent policies, including a collections policy, and instituted a programme of frequently changing exhibitions dealing with a wide range of subjects. During his tenure there were over eighty temporary exhibitions that encompassed not just painting but also prints, photography, design, advertising, pottery, weaving, architecture and dress. In addition, there were important exhibitions of both historical and contemporary New Zealand art, including the aforementioned *Object and Image* show. Westbrook also worked to bring in exhibitions from overseas, although his ability to do so was limited. For example, he tried unsuccessfully to obtain on loan the exhibition *American Primitive Art* from the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, which had been displayed at the Whitechapel Gallery in London in 1954.<sup>101</sup> He did, however, secure an exhibition of Henry Moore sculpture from the British Council, although this was not displayed until 1956, after his departure. This show was important as the first large-scale exhibition of modernist art from overseas to come to New Zealand. In large part due to the controversy that it generated, it attracted around 36,000 visitors to the ACAG during its period of display.<sup>102</sup> This would stand for some time as the ACAG's record attendance for an exhibition.

After Westbrook's resignation, the ACC once again undertook an international search for a director, and appointed Peter Tomory, another young Englishman. Tomory had worked at the York Art Gallery and been keeper at the Leicester Art Gallery, and at the time of his application was assistant regional director for the Arts Council of Great Britain. Tomory took up the directorship in March 1956, and occupied the post until January 1965. He built on the changes initiated by Westbrook, affirming the ACAG as the most professional and progressive art gallery in New Zealand. Most notably, from the perspective of this thesis, Tomory continued to bring

---

<sup>101</sup> See William Phipps, USIS public affairs officer, to Westbrook, 11 October 1955, Information Files, HS 04/35, E H McCormick Research Library, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki (hereafter cited as AAG Archives).

<sup>102</sup> For the controversy surrounding this show, see Jim and Mary Barr, *When Art Hits the Headlines: A Survey of Controversial Art in New Zealand* (Wellington: National Art Gallery, 1987), 21-23.



in exhibitions from overseas, and under him the ACAG created a formalised structure for the distribution of exhibitions.

The other art galleries in New Zealand would also operate as sites for interaction with the United States, but in the period I am investigating they were far less proactive than the ACAG in creating contacts and seeking out exhibitions of American art, with the later exception of the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in the early 1970s. While Westbrook and Tomory, with the support of the ACC, were able to create a more dynamic environment at the ACAG, the other art galleries in New Zealand remained relatively stagnant and conservative, generally suffering from ill-defined policies and a lack of funding and staff. In the three other main centres, the NAG in Wellington, the Robert MacDougall Art Gallery in Christchurch (RMAG, now the Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu) and the Dunedin Public Art Gallery (DPAG) were all held back by the fact that control over policy remained in the hands of committees, which generally consisted of amateurs with conservative tastes and little understanding of how to run an art gallery. In addition, for much of the period, those in charge of running these galleries on a day-to-day basis lacked the professional gallery experience of Westbrook and Tomory, and were also more insular in outlook.

At the NAG, Stewart MacLennan was in charge from 1948 to 1968. He was a traditionalist, and, although Tony Mackle suggests that he had “a broader appreciation of contemporary abstraction than the gallery’s purchases would indicate,”<sup>103</sup> this appreciation did not extend to overseas trends such as Abstract Expressionism. In Christchurch, William Baverstock was appointed honorary curator of the RMAG in 1949, made director in 1960, and retired in 1969. Over time his conservatism and disdain for modern and contemporary art became further entrenched, although, despite this antipathy, Baverstock did put on a large number of exhibitions featuring such art.<sup>104</sup> At the DPAG, Annette Pearse was appointed as curator in 1946, her position upgraded to director in 1958, and she retired in 1964. Her main qualification

---

<sup>103</sup> Tony Mackle, “Stewart Bell MacLennan: ‘The Man for the Job,’ ” *Journal of New Zealand Art History* 26 (2005): 60.

<sup>104</sup> For an even-handed discussion of Baverstock’s time in charge at the RMAG, see Warren Feeney, *The Radical, the Reactionary and the Canterbury Society of Arts 1880-1996* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2011), 91-105.

for the position of curator was that she had studied art in Glasgow and London prior to moving to Otago with her husband.<sup>105</sup> Her primary focus was on British art, and she showed little interest in either modern art or contemporary New Zealand work. In each case, the conservatism of the directors was entrenched by their lengthy period in control.

Lack of funding also affected the ability of the RMAG and NAG to adequately maintain and develop their facilities and improve their collections. In Christchurch, Baverstock managed to make some alterations and improvements to the gallery building following his appointment as curator, but was unable to secure funding for more major changes, particularly the extension of the limited exhibition space.<sup>106</sup> At the NAG, which shared premises with the Dominion Museum, concerns would grow through the 1950s regarding storage, exhibition space and accessibility.<sup>107</sup> The DPAG was at least in a better position financially, which enabled it to make purchases and to expand its building. All three galleries, however, suffered from inadequate staffing levels. In 1958, while the staff of the ACAG had grown to eleven, the NAG had four (Maclennan, a secretary, a clerk and a carpenter), and both the DPAG and the RMAG had only three each, including the directors. In terms of exhibitions, these galleries (along with other art galleries in New Zealand) became reliant on the ACAG's travelling exhibition programme, although the NAG did also maintain a role in touring shows, as it was often the first point of contact for embassies due to its national status and location in Wellington.

### **1955-1958: Increasing Interactions and Encounters**

As a result of the improving cultural climate in New Zealand, the rising professionalism at the ACAG and the growing spread of American art abroad, art-related interactions and encounters between New Zealand and the United States began to increase in both number and importance from the mid-1950s. First, there was some

---

<sup>105</sup> For Pearse's background, see Peter Entwisle, *Treasures of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery* (Dunedin: Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 1990), 25.

<sup>106</sup> Neil Roberts, *The Robert McDougall Art Gallery: A Profile of the Art Gallery of the City of Christchurch, 1932-82* (Christchurch: Christchurch City Council, 1982), 41.

<sup>107</sup> Mackle, "Stewart Bell Maclennan," 57.

contact with MoMA, but of greater significance at this stage was the USIS's expansion of its operations in this area.

### The Museum of Modern Art and New Zealand

In 1955, Wilfred Beckett of the Auckland publisher Beckett Sterling travelled to New York, and during his trip met with Monroe Wheeler, the director of the Department of Exhibitions and Publications at MoMA.<sup>108</sup> This meeting prompted Wheeler to write a letter to Eric Westbrook in mid-1955 offering to send an exhibition of MoMA publications to New Zealand. He proposed that, if the ACAG would arrange for the books to tour around the four main centres, they would become the property of the gallery at the end of the tour. The collection of seventy books arrived in November 1955, and was presumably then sent around the country. However, there is no information on whether or not the books were actually displayed, or if they were just circulated for the benefit of gallery staff. Although I have not uncovered a list of exactly what these books were, it is possible to identify the majority of them from the Auckland Art Gallery's library catalogue. On American art, there were exhibition catalogues of recent MoMA shows, such as *Abstract Painting and Sculpture in America* and *Fourteen Americans*, which was notable for the inclusion of Arshile Gorky and Robert Motherwell. There was a monograph on Alexander Calder, and also more general texts, such as *What is Modern Painting?* by Alfred Barr, *Sculpture of the Twentieth Century* and *Contemporary Painters*, which discussed European, British and American painters, including Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko. There were also exhibition catalogues on a range of modernist European artists, as well as more general survey shows, such as *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* and *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*. As noted, since the post-war 1940s, art books from overseas had begun to enter New Zealand with increasing frequency, and this collection represented an important addition. It provided exposure both to some of the most important European avant-garde art trends and to new developments coming out of the United States, and may well have given the staff of New Zealand's art galleries

---

<sup>108</sup> The information below comes from a submission made by Westbrook to the ACC Library Committee, the body then responsible for the ACAG. Minutes, ACC Library Committee, 17 November 1955, 7, Minute Book 1954-1956, ACC 108, Item 6, Auckland Council Archives, Auckland, New Zealand (hereafter cited as AC Archives).

greater insight into modern movements and exposed them to images that they had not seen before.

The donation of books was followed, in June 1956, by a visit from Monroe Wheeler himself, who came to Auckland as part of a world tour aimed at increasing the international distribution of MoMA's publications.<sup>109</sup> Wheeler attended a panel discussion at the University of Auckland's School of Architecture, entitled "Abstract Art and Architecture,"<sup>110</sup> and also visited the Auckland War Memorial Museum and the ACAG, meeting with Gilbert Archey, the director of the museum, and Peter Tomory. In a subsequent report on his trip he described Tomory as a "progressive young director" and wrote that the ACAG "is just beginning to acquire modern art and would cherish (but at this point cannot afford) examples of the work of leading American artists."<sup>111</sup> He also noted that "Mr. Tomory said that nothing would be more welcome than an exhibition of paintings from us, American or European, or both."<sup>112</sup> This prompted Wheeler to mention *The Family of Man* photography exhibition as a possible option, although nothing would come of this.<sup>113</sup> Wheeler's visit was short and not well-publicised, but it was nevertheless important for those people who were able to interact with him. As Antony Alpers wrote in a letter to Wheeler not long after his visit:

There is always a queer hush in the land in the period immediately following a visitation such as yours. For a brief moment we have felt ourselves in touch with Great Things. A few of us feel encouraged and flattered by a little attention (which we don't get much of, ordinarily) and we are grateful for being stimulated; then the visitor departs, and we settle down again to contemplate the situation we are obliged to live with. In general a faith in future things sustains us. But the occasional shot in the arm from one of you thunderbolt Americans is somehow more heartening even than the knowledge that things are better for the arts here than they were twenty years ago.<sup>114</sup>

---

<sup>109</sup> Antony Alpers, "U.S. Art Director Finds Points Here," *Auckland Star* (hereafter cited as *AS*), 21 June 1956. Alpers was an Auckland journalist and writer.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> Wheeler, "Auckland, New Zealand," Monroe Wheeler Papers, I.128, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York (hereafter cited as MoMA Archives, NY).

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> This show was toured extensively around the world by MoMA's International Program from the late 1950s through to 1965. For details on this show, see John Szarkowski, "The Family of Man," in *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-Century*, 13-37.

<sup>114</sup> Alpers to Wheeler, 28 June 1956, MW I.128, MoMA Archives, NY.

This statement highlights the issue of New Zealand's isolation at this time and the value for New Zealanders interested in the arts to have contact with someone like Wheeler, who worked at the pre-eminent museum of modern art in the world. Wheeler was not, however, the first such visitor, for he was preceded by a few months by Dr. Grace McCann Morley, director of the San Francisco Museum of Art.

### The growing role of the United States Information Service

The possibility of a visit by Dr. Morley had first been raised in a communication from the US State Department to the US embassy in Wellington dated 7 June 1955.<sup>115</sup> The State Department had enlisted Morley to undertake an extended international tour taking in countries in East and Central Africa and Asia as part of its International Educational Exchange Program that sent specialists around the world, usually to developing nations, to impart their knowledge and experience. Morley was well-qualified for such a task as she was a major figure in the museum world, both in the United States and internationally. She had degrees from the University of California and a doctorate from the Sorbonne, and had been curator of the Cincinnati Art Museum from 1930-33. After she moved back to the San Francisco area, she was appointed the first curator (in effect the director) of the SFMA in 1934. Among numerous other roles she was the UNESCO head of museums from 1947 to 1949, she helped create the International Council of Museums, and in May 1955 had been elected president of the American Association of Art Museum Directors. She had also been heavily involved with the US State Department, and had been a member of its Advisory Committee on Art from 1941 to 1945.

Although the embassy in Wellington did not view a cultural specialist as a priority,<sup>116</sup> it certainly recognised that her visit was an important opportunity. Consequently, William Phipps, the public affairs officer for the USIS in New Zealand, wrote to Eric Westbrook at the ACAG, informing him of the State Department's offer and noting, "We would be pleased to receive any

---

<sup>115</sup> Department of State to US embassy, Wellington, "Educational Exchange: U.S. Specialists Program, Mrs. Grace McCann Morley," 7 June 1955, Folder 511.44/2-2555, Box 2137, Central Decimal Files 1955-1959, RG59, NACP.

<sup>116</sup> The US embassy had not included a cultural specialist in the list of grant priorities for educational exchange for 1956. US embassy, Wellington to Department of State, "Educational Exchange: FY 1956 Prospectus," 23 May 1955, *ibid*.

recommendations or suggestions you may have concerning utilization of her services by the Auckland Art Gallery should her visit materialize.”<sup>117</sup> Coincidentally, AGMANZ, at its annual general meeting held on 27 April 1955, had already discussed the idea of requesting that the United States send a specialist in museum education to New Zealand through the US Educational Foundation, the organisation in charge of the Fulbright programme in New Zealand.<sup>118</sup> It is unclear whether AGMANZ had made an approach to this body before Phipps wrote to Westbrook, but at the next meeting of its council, on 12 July 1955, Westbrook brought Phipps’s letter to its attention, and a motion was passed that Phipps be advised that a visit by Morley would be welcomed.<sup>119</sup> The council also stated its desire to have Morley meet as many museum staff as possible and said that it would be prepared to convene a conference during her visit to facilitate this.<sup>120</sup> Westbrook subsequently informed Phipps of the council’s eagerness for the visit,<sup>121</sup> but the question of whether it would go ahead remained uncertain for some time. Westbrook continued to seek confirmation from Phipps,<sup>122</sup> but it is likely that the inclusion of New Zealand on Morley’s itinerary was only finalised in November 1955,<sup>123</sup> indicating that New Zealand was not deemed a priority for such ventures.

Morley’s visit to New Zealand was part of a larger international tour that was based in the politics of the Cold War. That is, it was part of the broader information programme under President Eisenhower that was aimed at helping to create favourable environments to facilitate US foreign policy objectives and to encourage positive views of the United States, particularly as a response to Soviet propaganda

---

<sup>117</sup> Phipps to Westbrook, 5 July 1955, Information Files, HS 04/35, AAG Archives.

<sup>118</sup> Minutes, AGMANZ annual general meeting, 27 April 1955, 2, Volume I, July 1947 – December 1964 Minutes, CA000243, Te Papa Archives, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington (hereafter cited as Te Papa Archives).

<sup>119</sup> Minutes, meeting of the AGMANZ Council, 12 July 1955, 2, *ibid.* The AGMANZ Council was well aware of Morley’s stature through her work with UNESCO. Minutes, inaugural AGMANZ meeting, 3 July 1947, 19, *ibid.* Westbrook himself had met Morley several times in Europe, and in San Francisco in 1952. Westbrook to Phipps, 8 August 1955, Information Files, HS 04/35, AAG Archives.

<sup>120</sup> Minutes, Meeting of the AGMANZ Council, 12 July 1955, 2, Volume I, July 1947 – December 1964 Minutes, CA000243, Te Papa Archives.

<sup>121</sup> Westbrook to Phipps, 8 August 1955, Information Files, HS 04/35, AAG Archives.

<sup>122</sup> Westbrook to Phipps, 20 October 1955, *ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> The only other communication that I have found from the State Department in relation to Morley’s visit is an instruction from the State Department to the US embassy, Wellington, entitled “Educational Exchange: U.S. Specialists Program – Mrs. Grace McCann Morley” dated 23 November 1955, which referred to a previous instruction dated 16 November 1955 that gave Morley’s schedule. Folder 511.44/2-2555, Box 2137, Central Decimal Files 1955-59, RG59, NACP.

and its characterisation of the United States as materialistic and culturally impoverished. The majority of places that Morley travelled to were in the developing world, including Rhodesia, Uganda, Kenya, Pakistan and Thailand.<sup>124</sup> The African countries that Morley went to were British colonies, but a post-war wave of decolonisation was sweeping Africa, and they were becoming subject to increasing unrest and calls for independence.<sup>125</sup> Such places were viewed as being in danger of falling under the sway of Communists so anything that the United States did to promote goodwill and create support was recognised as a valuable part of the propaganda battle. In addition, Thailand and Pakistan, along with New Zealand and Australia, were recent signatories to the South East Asia Treaty Organisation, which may have been a factor in their inclusion.

Morley arrived in New Zealand on 20 February 1956 and left on 5 March, and her trip garnered considerable press attention, with articles in newspapers at the main stops on her tour: Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin and Auckland.<sup>126</sup> In each centre she visited the main museum and art gallery, was taken around points of interest and gave lectures accompanied by slides. To have a person of Morley's stature visit New Zealand was an important event. It provided a rare opportunity for New Zealand museum and art gallery professionals, as well as the artists and the general public, to meet and hear an expert on museums, arts education and American art. Of particular note is her discussion of contemporary developments in American art. As the *Dominion* in Wellington recorded, at her lecture at the NAG, "Dr. Morley traced aspects of early American art and dealt liberally with contemporary art. She appealed for patience and understanding in trying to appreciate much modern abstract art."<sup>127</sup> Morley was in an excellent position to address this topic as the SFMA was

---

<sup>124</sup> As Odd Arne Westad states, "Increasingly, in the 1950s, with the strengthening of the radical Left and of Soviet influence in the Third World, a key US motive also became to secure these countries against Communism and alliances with the Soviet Union." Westad, "The Cold War and the International History of the Twentieth Century," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, vol. 1, *Origins*, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 10.

<sup>125</sup> For example, in Kenya the Mau Mau rebellion had begun in 1952.

<sup>126</sup> See, for example, "Director of San Francisco Art Museum in N.Z. on Widespread Tour," *Dominion*, 22 February 1956; "Art Authority," *AS*, 24 February 1956; "Minister Welcomes U.S. Art Authority," *Dominion*, 24 February 1956; "Illustrated Story of American Art," *Evening Post* (hereafter cited as *EP*), 24 February 1956; "Museums Should Become Vehicles of Education," *Press*, 27 February 1956; "Noted U.S. Authority on Art Visits City," *ODT*, 28 February 1956; "U.S. Art Gallery Director's Visit," *AS*, 29 February 1956.

<sup>127</sup> "Minister Welcomes U.S. Art Authority."

specifically devoted to modern art and she had organised shows of the work of Arshile Gorky, Clyfford Still, Jackson Pollock, Robert Motherwell and Mark Rothko in the 1940s. At the ACAG, where she was hosted by Colin McCahon (at that point acting director in the period between Westbrook's departure and Peter Tomory's arrival), she gave a lecture on "Art in America" and met with local painters.<sup>128</sup> Significantly, too, her last day in the country, 5 March, coincided with the arrival of Tomory, and she was able to meet with him for a few hours on the morning of her departure.

The USIS in New Zealand considered Morley's visit "an outstanding success" and recorded that she "made a very real contribution, both as a specialist in museum and gallery administration and as a person."<sup>129</sup> The US ambassador in Wellington, Robert Hendrickson, also conveyed his thanks to Morley in a letter following her return to San Francisco. In response Morley wrote,

There is no doubt at all that art and other cultural values are exceedingly important in American life and that they often are overlooked in discussions of us abroad. I am pleased indeed if I did something to overcome the false impressions current about us and our life in the United States.<sup>130</sup>

This demonstrates the value that Morley's visit held for the USIS as part of its overall goal of countering anti-American feeling in New Zealand. However, Morley's letter also provides further insights. She reported that she "found New Zealanders, artists, those interested in the arts, and just the ordinary intelligent citizen extremely responsive" and expressed empathy with New Zealand's isolation, comparing it to her experience in California.<sup>131</sup> She noted, too, that she

found there was appreciation for our American growth in art and a deep interest in what our artists of today are doing to find their place in the general

---

<sup>128</sup> "U.S Art Gallery Director's Visit."

<sup>129</sup> US embassy, Wellington to the Department of State, "Educational Exchange: Prospectus Call, FY 1957," 22 May 1956, 1, Folder 511.433/1-656, Box 2137, Central Decimal Files 1955-59, RG59, NACP.

<sup>130</sup> Morley to Hendrickson, 29 March 1956, Records from 1956, Box 124, Folder 9, Office of the Director 1935-58, Administrative Records, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Research Library (hereafter cited as SFMoMA Archives).

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.* As she stated, "For my part I felt very close to their problems of keeping in touch with art for we in California were long isolated and had the difficulty of informing artists and public alike on what was going on in the international world of art so that they could take their place in it."



creative movement which they know much better of course in its European manifestations than in ours.<sup>132</sup>

Finally, she also wrote that she would maintain contact with the colleagues that she met.<sup>133</sup> Morley subsequently sent letters to the museum and gallery directors in the four centres and enclosed catalogues from the SFMA. She also contributed an article to New Zealand's *Education* magazine,<sup>134</sup> and even approached MoMA in New York to ask if it would provide funds to send an exhibition of Native American culture to Australia and New Zealand.<sup>135</sup> However, it would be Morley's role in organising Colin McCahon's 1958 trip to the United States, and the subsequent relationship that continued for several years between the ACAG and the SFMA, that were the most enduring legacy of her visit to New Zealand. These will be explored in Chapter Two.

In addition to Morley's visit, the USIS was now increasingly receiving a range of exhibits for display around New Zealand from the USIA, and this included several specifically devoted to art. The first of these was an exhibition of forty-one colour reproductions entitled *Highlights of American Painting*. The works for inclusion had been selected by the American Federation of Arts, a private organisation, at the request of the US State Department in 1953.<sup>136</sup> Because it consisted of reproductions, multiple copies of the exhibition existed. These were circulated to countries in Latin America, Europe, Asia and Africa in the 1950s in order to promote US culture abroad and proved to be very popular.<sup>137</sup> The earliest work represented dated from 1674, and the artists reproduced included John Singleton Copley, James Whistler, Winslow Homer, Mary Cassat, George Bellows, Lyonel Feininger, Grant Wood, Andrew Wyeth, Georgia O'Keeffe and Edward Hopper. The most recent work was Wyeth's *Christina's World*, painted in 1948. The majority of paintings were either landscapes

---

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> This was not unique to New Zealand. As Morley wrote in a letter to the State Department following her trip, "I hope eventually to make the follow-up as profitable as the original visit was, and perhaps in many cases much more so." Morley to Mary Vance Trent, public affairs adviser, Office of British Commonwealth and Northern European Affairs, State Department, 23 May 1956, Records from 1956, Box 124, Folder 5, Office of the Director 1935-58, Administrative Records, SFMoMA Archives.

<sup>134</sup> Morley to Mrs. P. M. Hattaway, Editor Education, 10 May 1956, Records from 1956, Box 124, Folder 6, *ibid*.

<sup>135</sup> Morley to Rene d'Harmoncourt, director of MoMA, 14 May 1956, Records from 1956, Box 124, Folder 5, *ibid*.

<sup>136</sup> Krenn, *Fall-out Shelters for the Human Spirit*, 122. For a history of the American Federation of Arts see *AFA: A Century in the Arts* (New York: American Federation of the Arts, 2010), accessed 24 June 2014, <http://www.afaweb.org/publications/documents/finalcomplete.pdf>.

<sup>137</sup> Krenn, *Fall-out Shelters for the Human Spirit*, 122.

or depictions of historical scenes with Arthur Dove's *Flour Mill Abstraction*, 1938, the work closest to an abstract painting; this was still a time when sending modernist American art overseas under government auspices was a contentious issue.

Significantly, although the USIS brought *Highlights of American Painting* into New Zealand, it was not responsible for touring it. Instead, the USIS passed it on to the National Council of Adult Education and it was sent around the country by the CAS.<sup>138</sup> It was displayed first at the ACAG for two weeks from 14 March 1956, after which the Auckland CAS toured it around the North Island to over twenty towns, including Whangarei, Hamilton, Taupo and Gisborne. Venues included libraries, school halls, community and parish halls. Following this, it was sent to Christchurch and then Dunedin. A catalogue was written to accompany the show, but it is unclear whether this was available in New Zealand.<sup>139</sup> The USIS did at least supply leaflets describing each picture, which were mounted by the CAS to accompany the reproductions. Although it was only displayed in each location for a few days, the show was one of the first opportunities available to many New Zealanders to see examples of American art and over 3,500 people saw the show during its North Island tour.<sup>140</sup>

The activities of the USIS in New Zealand were a response to concerns over negative attitudes to the United States, but the involvement of the National Council of Adult Education and the CAS demonstrate the central role of New Zealand organisations to interactions. This is also demonstrated by the particular efforts of Peter Tomory, first as director of the ACAG, who sought to further interactions with the United States as part of his broader desire to expand the range of art available to New Zealanders. Tomory demonstrated this interest soon after his arrival in Auckland in March 1956, when he obtained permission from the ACC to travel to Wellington to liaise with several of the embassies there and discuss the prospects of receiving

---

<sup>138</sup> Records of the University of Auckland Centre for Continuing Education, MSS and Archives E-23, Item 187, Special Collections. University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services.

<sup>139</sup> Written by Lois Bingham, a USIA official, it not only provided a brief history of American art, but also promoted the idea of art as a reflection of American diversity. See Krenn, *Fall-out Shelters for the Human Spirit*, 122.

<sup>140</sup> A report from the CAS listed an attendance of 3,682 from seventeen North Island showings. "Report of the Annual Conference of Community Arts Service," 8 June 1957, 2, Records of the University of Auckland Centre for Continuing Education, MSS and Archives E-23, Item 287. Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services.

exhibitions. In addition to meeting with staff at the French, German and Italian legations, he met with LeVan Roberts of the USIS at the US embassy. As Tomory reported to the ACC, Roberts “suggested material for two exhibitions and, if these could be put together in America, then the U.S. Information Service would be responsible for transporting them to and from New Zealand.”<sup>141</sup> Tomory and Roberts also discussed the loan of films for the purposes of a film evening on American art at the ACAG, which led to a selection being shown at that gallery in the last week of September.<sup>142</sup> Subsequently, Tomory maintained contact with the USIS, which continued to supply him with material. For example, it provided the *35<sup>th</sup> Annual Exhibition of Advertising and Editorial Art and Design* that was displayed at the ACAG in December 1956.<sup>143</sup>

Such was the positive impression made by Tomory that he received a special mention from the embassy in Wellington in one of its communications to the State Department:

In their isolated position, New Zealanders, though discriminating, are eager to learn of other cultures and traditions and evidence a genuine respect for the cultural achievements of the United States. Perhaps one of the outstanding boosters of American culture, particularly in the art field, is Mr. P.A. TOMORY...who evinces great interest in the American art scene and has continually endeavored to secure works of American art. Mr. Tomory feels that America is way ahead in the modern art field, far and above any New Zealand efforts, and that New Zealand is tending towards the American cultural sphere.<sup>144</sup>

Tomory’s proactive approach demonstrated to the USIS that there was a demand for American art and also provided them with an important venue for exposure. I would

---

<sup>141</sup> Tomory to the town clerk, 17 August 1956, Information Files, HS 04/37, AAG Archives. It is unclear what the exhibitions referred to were.

<sup>142</sup> On 22 August 1956, Roseanne E. Burke, public affairs assistant at the USIS in Wellington, replied to Tomory to confirm that five films had been booked. The films were on Franklin Watkins (a realist portrait painter), “Grandma” Moses (Anna Mary Robertson Moses, an American folk artist), the National Gallery of Art, Colour Lithography, and Watercolour Landscape. Information Files, HS 04/37, AAG Archives.

<sup>143</sup> USIS, Wellington to USIA, Washington, DC, “Art Directors’ Club Exhibit – 35th Annual Exhibition of Advertising and Editorial Art and Design,” 28 January 1957, New Zealand [folder 2/2], 1957-1959, Records Concerning Exhibits in Foreign Countries; Records of the US Information Agency, Record Group 306 (RG306); NACP.

<sup>144</sup> US embassy, Wellington to the Department of State, “Educational Exchange: FY 1959 Country Program Proposal,” 27 June 1957, 2, 5.11.443/1-257, Box 2138, Central Decimal Files 1955-59, RG59, NACP.

also argue that Tomory's specific interest in exhibiting contemporary American art was a factor in the decision of the USIS to accept the exhibition *Eight American Artists* to tour New Zealand.

### *Eight American Artists*

In July 1956 the USIA approached the Seattle Art Museum (SAM) to assemble a selection of recent American paintings and sculptures for two exhibitions, one to tour through Western Europe and the other to tour countries around the Pacific.<sup>145</sup> Both shows would feature the work of the same artists, and both would be called *Eight American Artists*. The USIA specifically requested that the SAM select works by four painters based in the north-west of the United States: Guy Anderson, Morris Graves, Kenneth Callahan and Mark Tobey.<sup>146</sup> The other four artists chosen were sculptors from the New York area: Rhys Caparn (the only woman in the show), Seymour Lipton, David Hare and Ezio Martinelli. Because the document in question does not specifically state that these sculptors were requested by the USIA, this was likely a decision made by the SAM. The works for both shows were selected by Dr. Richard Fuller, director of the SAM, with many coming from private collectors. The European exhibition consisted of thirty paintings and eleven sculptures, the Pacific exhibition, twenty-seven paintings and ten sculptures. Both began their respective tours in March 1957. The European version started in Copenhagen, then went to six cities in Germany, two in England and three in France. The Pacific tour began in South Korea, after which it went to twelve cities in Japan, followed by Manila in the Philippines, then Wellington, Auckland, Melbourne and Sydney.

#### The exhibition as Cold War propaganda

As it was conceived by the USIA, *Eight American Artists* was clearly a form of Cold War propaganda, part of the broader project to showcase US cultural achievements and to counter the negative Soviet portrayal of the United States. It is significant that the key destinations were Japan and Germany. Both had, of course, been enemies in

---

<sup>145</sup> "Introduction," Folder: Catalog Copy, Acc. no. 2636-022, Seattle Art Museum Records 1913-1985, University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections Division (hereafter cited as SAM Archives).

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

World War II but were now important allies, and both were on the front line in the fight against Communism. Of note, too, was the decision to include the Pacific region. Western Europe had been the main target for US propaganda efforts since the war, but sending a version of the exhibition to countries in the Pacific reflected USIA recognition that this area was of increasing significance within the wider Cold War.

Within both arenas, the focus of the exhibition on modern art was noteworthy. All the artists included were currently practising and the works were relatively recent, with all but one work from either the 1940s or 1950s. The paintings in both shows ranged from abstractions to figurative works, and the sculpture showed the influence of modernist, surrealist and constructivist forms and utilised new techniques and materials that differed from traditional practice. As noted, the use of modern art by the US information programme had been a contentious internal political issue in the United States, with conservative politicians viewing abstract art, and many artists, as subversive. However, despite some continuing controversies, by the mid-1950s, as Krenn records, it was becoming increasingly clear not only that exhibitions of American art “were having a favorable impact on foreign audiences and simultaneously serving as effective broadsides against anti-American propaganda,”<sup>147</sup> but that there was a clear demand from countries around the world for contemporary works.<sup>148</sup> *Eight American Artists* certainly fits within this context, although I would also contend that, given that there had recently been controversy generated by the exhibition *Sport in Art*,<sup>149</sup> the USIA felt some sense of constraint in relation to the exhibition’s content. That the USIA specifically requested the SAM to assemble a show featuring the four Northwest painters is particularly important here. The work of these artists was not as radical as recent painting coming out of New York. Moreover, these artists had recently achieved a certain respectability and acceptance when they had been featured in an article in a September 1953 issue of *Life* magazine, entitled “Mystic Painters of the Northwest.”<sup>150</sup> This article was important in establishing the

---

<sup>147</sup> Krenn, *Fall-out Shelters for the Human Spirit*, 118.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>149</sup> This exhibition demonstrates the continuing controversy around the use of art by the USIA at this time. The American Federation of Arts had put together *Sport in Art* for *Sports Illustrated* magazine, and it was supposed to travel to Australia for display at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics under the auspices of the USIA. However, it was cancelled after the standard concerns were raised regarding the political soundness of modern art and the political affiliations of some of the artists involved. See *ibid.*, 105-8.

<sup>150</sup> “Mystic Painters of the Northwest,” *Life*, 28 September 1953, 84-87.

idea of a school of Northwest art, and in making these artists known throughout the United States and exposing them to a wider, international audience.<sup>151</sup>

### The exhibition comes to New Zealand

*Eight American Artists* opened first at the NAG, on 6 December 1957, and then travelled to Auckland where it was displayed at the ACAG from 6 January to 7 February 1958. I have not been able to locate correspondence relating to the inclusion of New Zealand as part of the tour, but some light can be shed on the likely process by looking at the circumstances behind the addition of Australia. As documented in a letter from Allen Wilcox, an employee at the SAM who had joined the show in Manila to oversee its transportation and interpret it,<sup>152</sup> Australia was a late addition to the tour, only confirmed when the exhibition was in New Zealand. According to this letter, written to Fuller during Wilcox's stay in Melbourne, the USIS in Australia had rejected the exhibition when it was offered to them in 1957 because they could "see little use in a travelling art show."<sup>153</sup> It was only because Eric Westbrook, the former director of the ACAG who was now director of the NGV in Melbourne, wrote a letter to specifically request the show (probably directly to the USIA, but Wilcox does not specify), that this institution was added to the itinerary.<sup>154</sup> The Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW) was later included too, but only after Wilcox himself had made these arrangements when he stopped in Sydney on his way to Melbourne.<sup>155</sup>

From this, it is possible to infer that the USIS in New Zealand was also offered *Eight American Artists* in 1957 but, unlike the USIS in Australia, it accepted the show. I would argue that Tomory's efforts in both maintaining communications with the USIS and soliciting and displaying its material were key factors here as they demonstrated to the USIS that there was a genuine interest in American art in New

---

<sup>151</sup> For further details on the idea of a Northwest artistic movement, see Laura Landau, "Points of Intersection: Chronicling the Interactions of Tobey, Graves, Callahan, and Anderson," in Landau, *Northwest Mythologies: The Interactions of Mark Tobey, Morris Graves, Kenneth Callahan, and Guy Anderson* (Tacoma: Tacoma Art Museum, 2003), 26.

<sup>152</sup> Wilcox's travel was paid for by the USIA through one of its American Specialists grants. Department of State to the US embassy, Wellington, "Educational Exchange: American Specialists Program," 16 January 1958, 5.11.443/1-257, Box 2138, Central Decimal Files 1955-59, RG59, NACP.

<sup>153</sup> Wilcox to Fuller, 11 February 1958, Folder: USIA Curator Pacific, Acc. no. 2636-022, Seattle Art Museum Records 1913-1985, SAM Archives.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

Zealand. The way the process unfolded also indicates the important role played by the local USIS branch in determining interactions with its host country, as well as the power of local agency – the show would not have gone to Australia at all if Westbrook had not taken the initiative.

### The Pacific selection

Although discussion of some of the key features of the exhibition’s twenty-seven paintings and ten sculptures is constrained by the difficulty in locating images of all the works, it is important to establish a sense of the type of works that were on display. Mark Tobey, whose reputation has endured the best out of all the artists in the show, was represented by eight paintings. Intriguingly, the proposed press release reported that, at Tobey’s request, the exhibitions emphasised the “white-writing” phase of his work “and its early origin.”<sup>156</sup> Tobey’s “white-writing” was his “great innovation;” it was an all-over style of painting in which “the calligraphic, tightly meshed interlacing of white lines... build up to a vertical, rectangular mass reaching almost to the edges of the frame.”<sup>157</sup> However, its importance was at this point being underplayed by the likes of critic Clement Greenberg, particularly in relation to the work of Jackson Pollock.<sup>158</sup> Tobey may thus have been wanting to reassert his own primacy as an innovator to a foreign audience, and that his wishes were followed is a further indication of the hands-off approach of the USIA. Three paintings in the show, *New York*, 1944 (figure 1), *Flow of the Night*, 1943 and *Western Town*, 1944, showcased this technique. These paintings are small in scale but convey the energy and movement of the urban experience through complex interconnections of line. The importance of line to Tobey’s oeuvre is further demonstrated by his other paintings in the selection. For example, *Gothic*, 1943 (figure 2), depicts an architectural structure, built up through the multiplication of lines, and *Canal of*

---

<sup>156</sup> “Proposed Press Release,” Folder: Catalog Copy, Acc. no. 2636-022, Seattle Art Museum Records 1913-1985, SAM Archives.

<sup>157</sup> Judith S. Kays, “Mark Tobey and Jackson Pollock: Setting the Record Straight,” in *Mark Tobey*, ed. Kosme de Barañano and Matthias Bärmann (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, 1997), 104.

<sup>158</sup> As Judith Kays records, Clement Greenberg had claimed in 1955 that Pollock had arrived at his own particular style of all-over painting without seeing Tobey’s “white-writing” works, but she demonstrates that this was not the case. *Ibid.*, 91-114.

*Cultures* presents an aerial view looking down on closely packed, calligraphic lines denoting figures.

Morris Graves, who remains the best-known painter out of the Northwest after Tobey, had seven works included, dating from a 1936 still-life, *Fruit and Vegetables*, the earliest in the show, to works from the 1950s. These show his particular concern with nature, and four feature birds, one of his most common motifs (figure 3). The other two painters, Guy Anderson and Kenneth Callahan, were each represented by six paintings. All Anderson's works dated from the 1950s. In three of these, *St Sebastian*, 1952, *Deposition in a Fragment*, 1950, and *Prometheus Slumbering*, 1953, the artist has utilised religious or mythological subject-matter to create symbolic pictures using figurative means; the figures are often exaggerated or elongated, painted in an expressionistic manner in a fractured landscape. Anderson's two most recent works in the selection, *Dry Country* (figure 4) and *Brooding Lioness*, both from 1955, demonstrated his recent interest in landscape as a subject in itself and animals. Callahan's works, such as *Tides*, 1948-49 (figure 5) and *Journey on a Star*, 1949, also showed that artist's interest in landscape; he took the natural forms of the Northwest as his starting point to create abstracted landscapes in subdued, earthy tones, sometimes populated by figures.

The sculptures in *Eight American Artists* demonstrated some of the techniques that had developed in the United States in the post-war period. Moreover, each of the sculptors utilised abstracted forms, though the titles of the works on display reveal their basis in nature or figuration. Rhys Caparn had three works in bronze in the show. Two of these, *Birds Walking by the Sea*, 1950 (figure 6) and *Cat*, 1953 are examples of her abstracted animal sculptures. David Hare, who was heavily influenced by the Surrealists, was also represented by three works: *Frightened Bird*, 1946, *Figure and Chair*, 1949, and *Night Dance*, 1951 (figure 7). I have only located an image of the last sculpture, which shows Hare's interest in interpenetrating forms. As Wilcox wrote in an article for *Home and Building*, in this work, Hare "composes volume merely by wire which encloses space, disclosing that form does not depend upon solid matter."<sup>159</sup> Seymour Lipton's *Germinal*, 1953 (figure 8), is an example of the new

---

<sup>159</sup> Allen Wilcox, "8 American Artists," *Home and Building*, 1 March 1958, 48-49.



technique that he had developed that consisted of assembling sheets of metals. Based on the life-cycle of a seed, *Germinal* is a dynamic work of formal variation that belies its organic subject-matter through its sharp, protruding features. Likewise, Ezio Martinelli's *Garuda Bird*, 1956, demonstrates his interest in depicting mythological subjects in new ways, and shows, as noted by Wilcox, the artist "[exploiting] possibilities in his use of iridescent coloured welds."<sup>160</sup>

### Framing the exhibition

In keeping with the outsourcing of the show, the press release was written by the SAM, although it was distributed by the local USIS branch.<sup>161</sup> It acknowledged the role of the SAM in organising the show, and of the USIA as a sponsor. It then set out to establish the value of the exhibition, stating, for example, that "the four painters represent what many times has been described as the most important school of contemporary American painting."<sup>162</sup> It emphasised the diversity of the work on display but also pointed out that the exhibition offered only a limited selection through the inclusion of a quote by Fuller:

The exhibition obviously presents only a small segment of the infinite variety of contemporary art in the United States, but it includes work by artists who show far more than the rare spark of creative genius and who in my opinion will survive in future generations.<sup>163</sup>

Finally, it gave some sense of the characteristics of the work and provided information on the artists involved. In Auckland, the exhibition was also accompanied by a catalogue (in reality, a foldout brochure). It is likely that this was also put together with information supplied by the SAM, although the decision to publish a catalogue lay with the local branch of the USIS and host institution in each city. In the opening blurb, the role of the SAM was once again emphasised (but without mention of the USIA), followed by general comments on the artists and the properties of the artworks. It concluded with another quote from Fuller, that "these exhibits, speaking

---

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>161</sup> There are two sources of information here. I have matched the "Proposed Press Release" in the SAM Archives with a newspaper article clearly derived from it, entitled "Vital U.S. Art Show Due," *NZH*, 16 November 1957.

<sup>162</sup> "Proposed Press Release," SAM Archives.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

in the international language of creative art, will be of wide interest and an inspiration to both artist and layman alike.”<sup>164</sup> There was also a list of works, and brief biographical sketches of each artist accompanied by an image.

At the NAG, the exhibition was opened by the US ambassador, Francis Russell. He gave a speech, which was reported in Wellington’s two main newspapers, the *Evening Post* and the *Dominion*. This can in part be read in Cold War terms. First, the *Evening Post* recorded Russell’s discussion of the value of art as a means of communication between countries. As it reported, the ambassador stated, “Art is one of the principal ways by which a people makes itself known, both to its contemporaries throughout the world, and to coming generations.”<sup>165</sup> This aligned the exhibition with the intention of the USIA to foster good relations between the United States and its allies. Both newspapers also detailed Russell’s characterisation of the artists and artworks as non-conformist. As the *Dominion* recounted, Russell said that “Non-conformity was one of the essential qualities of the great artist,” and that “every great new movement in art... had always been at issue with the mode prevailing. Conflict between the conservative and the visionary was stimulating.”<sup>166</sup> This newspaper also mentioned that Russell noted that “his remarks should not be taken to mean that every non-conformist in the field was a great artist.... Often the contrary was the case. The conservative had value as a protector of the past and of established values.”<sup>167</sup> Russell thus put forward a specific meaning for the exhibition while also showing sensitivity towards the art traditionalists present.

I would further argue that Russell’s discussion of the value of non-conformity was a veiled criticism of the Soviet Union and its art. This is particularly likely because an exhibition entitled *Contemporary Soviet Art*, brought to New Zealand by the Soviet legation, was then touring the country and had recently been displayed in Wellington.<sup>168</sup> It consisted of around 150 paintings, sculptures and graphic works, which were, as a rule, realist in style and traditional in subject-matter; the paintings were primarily landscapes, portraits, still lives and genre scenes. The exhibition was

---

<sup>164</sup> *Eight American Artists* [Auckland: Auckland City Art Gallery, 1958], np.

<sup>165</sup> “American Art Show Opened by Ambassador,” *EP*, 7 December 1957.

<sup>166</sup> “Non-conformity Prerequisite of Great Artist,” *Dominion*, 7 December 1957.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> For discussion of this exhibition, see Richard Wolfe, “Art in the Cold War: Cultural Contact between New Zealand and the Soviet Union,” *Art New Zealand* 144 (Summer 2012-2013): 63-64.

ostensibly designed to promote a better understanding of the USSR, but it was also intended as an expression of Soviet cultural achievement. The US embassy would certainly have been aware of this show, as it kept a close watch on Soviet activities.

I have been unable to confirm details on the opening of *Eight American Artists* in Auckland. However, I suspect that it was opened by another member of the US embassy staff, James T. Pettus, who was photographed with Tomory inspecting works from the show (figure 9). If so, he presumably conveyed similar messages to Ambassador Russell. However, the person who played the most important role in interpreting the exhibition for the New Zealand audience was Allen Wilcox, the SAM employee who had joined the show in Manila. In both Wellington and Auckland he worked hard to offer a meaningful interpretation of the show to as many people as possible. In a letter to Fuller from Wellington, he wrote that he was giving six to eight tours to special groups each day, as well as presenting evening lectures and films, and conducting radio and press interviews.<sup>169</sup> His discussions covered not just the exhibition but also other topics, such as early American art, and the SAM itself.<sup>170</sup> He even fulfilled something of an ambassadorial role, having tea with Lottie Nash, the wife of the New Zealand prime minister, Labour's Walter Nash. As Wilcox wrote in relation to this, "it wasn't bad at all considering it laborite – really a dear lady who knows much about America."<sup>171</sup> This also reveals something of Wilcox's general attitude, suggesting that he was anti-Communist and as such was, from the point of view of the USIA, an acceptable person to tour with the show.

Wilcox's efforts were important as a way to attain a positive reception for the exhibition and thus fulfill its wider purpose. He also wrote an article for *Home and Building* magazine, published in March 1958 (after the show had left New Zealand). This functioned primarily as a general summary of the show and the artists represented, written by an insider. He emphasised the limited scope of the show, observing, "Its purpose is not to present a cross section of American art," and he also stressed that, despite the fact that the artists chosen came from two distinct areas of

---

<sup>169</sup> Wilcox to Fuller, 19 December 1957, Folder: USIA Curator Pacific, Acc. no. 2636-022, Seattle Art Museum Records 1913-1985, SAM Archives.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

the United States, their work should not be viewed in terms of “regionalism.”<sup>172</sup> This had been a major American art movement in the 1930s, but was far less relevant when discussing abstract art (or art with abstract elements). He also discussed a particular work for each artist, and concluded with the following statement:

What these painters and sculptors have in common, although separated by continental United States, is their belief in a personal vision – how they feel about the world around them. Combining this with their skills and high level of craftsmanship they bring into being works of art that are neither overly sensational nor hide-bound by convention – but works that speak quietly and unassumingly yet effectively.<sup>173</sup>

This article recognised that the art displayed was not familiar to most New Zealanders and may have been a response to some of the attitudes that Wilcox had encountered during to his time in New Zealand. Here, too, the critical responses to *Eight American Artists* demonstrate the value of Wilcox’s presence in interpreting the show for the local audience.

#### The New Zealand response

*Eight American Artists* was generally welcomed in New Zealand as the first show of original examples of modern American art to come to this country. The announcement of the show in the *New Zealand Herald*, headlined “Vital U.S. Art Show Due” and accompanied by a photograph of David Hare’s *Night Dance*, 1951, stated, “Long overdue, the show is new, diverse and important on many counts.”<sup>174</sup> However, this was also a time when the merits of modern art were hotly debated, and this concern was suggested by the review of the exhibition in the *Evening Post*. This piece, by Eric Ramsden, provides a clear idea of how certain sectors of the art establishment in New Zealand viewed modern, and especially abstract, art.<sup>175</sup>

---

<sup>172</sup> Wilcox, “8 American Artists,” 48.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>174</sup> “Vital U.S. Art Show Due.”

<sup>175</sup> Ramsden was a journalist and writer who had joined the staff of the *Evening Post* around 1945, becoming its diplomatic correspondent and art critic. As described by Michael King:

Ramsden’s role as an art critic was more contentious [than his other writing]. For nearly two decades he reviewed every major exhibition held in the capital. He favoured naturalism in painting and drawing and disliked what he regarded as impressionism or experimental art.... His opinions frequently provoked correspondence in the *Evening Post* and, on several occasions, threats of violence.

Ramsden described the exhibition as “a field day for the abstractionists, bordering on the freakish.”<sup>176</sup> Although he did note that “it is valuable of course, to see any contemporary American art” and praised some elements of the art on display, overall his discussion was negative, and he singled out David Hare for particular criticism as “the most freakish among the sculptors.”<sup>177</sup> Ramsden also expressed an expectation that shows such as *Eight American Artists* should be more broadly representative of what was being produced in their country of origin: “It would be unwise to term this collection a contemporary American one. It is a segment, merely, of what is being produced today in the United States.... It lacks balance.”<sup>178</sup> Tied into this was Ramsden’s recognition of the point of the exhibition from the US perspective that demonstrates that New Zealanders were not unaware of the deeper purpose of shows sent out by the USIA. As he argued, “But if a collection is to be sent abroad at the expense of the American taxpayer, presumably for the purpose of emphasising American culture, should it not have been selected on broader lines, should not other schools have been included?”<sup>179</sup>

*Eight American Artists* received a better critical reaction in Auckland, with the two reviews, in the *Auckland Star* and the *New Zealand Herald*, being generally positive. The former first remarked upon the unfamiliarity of the forms on display, stating that the artists “largely exploit imaginative and intellectual fields remote from those penetrated by New Zealand artists.”<sup>180</sup> It then noted that both Morris Graves and Mark Tobey “are as well known in Paris as in the United States, for they helped French abstract expressionism to gather force.”<sup>181</sup> Most readers were unlikely to be conversant with post-war avant-garde French painting, so statements such as this were designed to emphasise the international reputation of these painters.

---

King, “Ramsden, George Eric Oakes,” from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, last modified 14 January 2014, accessed 21 April 2015, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/4r1/ramsden-george-eric-oakes>.

<sup>176</sup> Eric Ramsden, “Abstractions Not Truly Representative,” *EP*, 6 December 1957.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>180</sup> H. M., “American Art Display Exploits Imaginative Field,” *AS*, 7 January 1958. I have not been able to ascertain who H. M. was.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

Imric Porsolt's review in the *New Zealand Herald* took a different tack. It was based around the idea that the works on display were not particularly "American," but was nevertheless generally complimentary. He began by stating,

Whether it was intended to be a demonstration of an 'American idiom' is immaterial. It would have spelt failure, even if the artists chosen had been of a more run-of-the-mill character.

Fortunately they are of sufficiently high personal quality to dispense with the prop of a manufactured national style.<sup>182</sup>

Porsolt instead argued that many of the works were in fact more akin to European art, with which he was very familiar. For example, in assessing Mark Tobey's work he wrote,

There is nothing particularly American in the classical calm of Mark Tobey's colours or in the 'calligraphic' method he uses in summing up such American phenomena as New York or a Western town. On the other hand, 'Forms Follow Man' may well be interpreted as a self-analysis of the American artist caught in a whirlwind of all the familiar forms from the School of Paris.<sup>183</sup>

Similarly, with regard to the sculptures, he claimed that these showed "even less common American ground," and taken together there is "not much to connect these artists, but plenty of links from each of them to European models."<sup>184</sup> He concluded his review on a broadly positive note, writing, "As a fair compensation for the lack of unity, there is a wealth of expressive means, a refreshing contempt for dogmatism and a surprising amount of patient, humble detail work, enjoyable enough in itself and a good lesson for our own practitioners."<sup>185</sup> This last phrase expresses what would become a common feature of critical responses to shows of modern American art: the idea that they would have a positive influence on local artists.

In terms of the public reception, the only evidence I have comes from Wilcox. In a letter to Fuller during his stay in Wellington, he wrote that "we've had a bit of success with the show,"<sup>186</sup> and later recorded that around 4,000 people had visited it in that

---

<sup>182</sup> I. V. P. [Imric Porsolt], "U.S. Artists' Work on Show at City Gallery," *NZH*, 8 January 1958.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> Wilcox to Fuller, 19 December 1957, SAM Archives.

city, meaning that it was relatively popular.<sup>187</sup> Of further interest, he wrote that “Hare is the darling of the show here in Wellington” as people responded positively to the humour in his work.<sup>188</sup> This can be compared with Ramsden’s dismissal of Hare as “freakish,” which emphasises that the views of the public did not necessarily conform to the reactions of critics. From an artist’s point of view, Mervyn Williams recalls seeing the show several times as an eighteen-year-old.<sup>189</sup> He remembers that he felt that the show was trying to strike a balance between displaying modernist tendencies and not causing offence. He believed that there were good artists in it, and was particularly interested in Tobey’s mark-making. However, he thought that it lacked the gutsiness of the Abstract Expressionists and recalls that many younger artists wanted to see work by more adventurous American artists. Moreover, he considered that there was nothing in the show that New Zealand artists themselves were not capable of. These sentiments speak to a growing interest among New Zealand artists in newer, more radical, American art forms, as well as their increasing confidence.

#### 1958: Highpoint and decline of the United States Information Service

From the point of view of the USIS, the propaganda value of *Eight American Artists* had been limited. This was recorded in a report to the USIA on the exhibition from February 1958, referred to in a later piece of correspondence from the USIA in Washington to the USIS in Wellington. This recalled the “dubious acceptance” of *Eight American Artists* and quoted the USIS’s suggestion “that the next show, when planned, be of equally high technical calibre, but be more representative of different aspects of American art, as it would have a wider audience appeal and also impress the local artistic group.”<sup>190</sup> This impression probably came from Ramsden’s review in the *Evening Post*, given the reference to a need for more representative examples of

---

<sup>187</sup> Wilcox to Fuller, 23 January 1958, Folder: USIA Curator Pacific, Acc. no. 2636-022, Seattle Art Museum Records 1913-1985, SAM Archives. The only other figure that I have uncovered for an exhibition at the NAG at around the same time is for the 1956 Henry Moore show, which received nearly 10,000 viewers, although this was exceptional. National Art Gallery and Dominion Museum annual report, *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives* (hereafter cited as *AJHR*), 1957, H21, 14.

<sup>188</sup> Wilcox to Fuller, 19 December 1957, SAM Archives.

<sup>189</sup> Mervyn Williams in discussion with the author, 19 June 2014.

<sup>190</sup> USIA to USIS, Wellington, “Proposed Exhibit: San Francisco Art Association Art Bank,” April 1959, New Zealand [folder 2/2], 1957-1959, Records Concerning Exhibits in Foreign Countries, RG306, NACP.

American art in the future. It also suggests that Wilcox's views were not sought, as his correspondence with Fuller gave a positive account of the show's reception.

Nevertheless, following *Eight American Artists*, the USIS brought three further art exhibitions to New Zealand in 1958, although this would be swiftly followed by the decline of this element of its operations. In March it toured a show entitled *35 Paintings by American Students* to New Zealand that was displayed at least at the ACAG and the NAG. This consisted of paintings, primarily in an abstract mode, by art students from American colleges and universities. The second show, *Currier and Ives Lithographs* had a wider tour. It was displayed at the NAG in March (at the same time as *35 Paintings by American Students*), and then travelled to the Hawke's Bay Art Society, ACAG, Dunedin Public Library, Invercargill Public Library, RMAG and the Sarjeant Art Gallery. Currier and Ives was a printmaking business based in New York that produced prints of events in the nineteenth century; the exhibition constituted fifty-four colour lithographs on loan from the Library of Congress in Washington, DC. The USIS reported to the USIA the positive reaction to this show: "No taboo elements were included in the exhibit, in fact this particular exhibit has received the widest possible appeal and interest in New Zealand of all USIA sponsored art exhibits to be shown here."<sup>191</sup> The mention of "taboo elements" may well have been in reference to *Eight American Artists*.

Finally, in October 1958 the USIS brought in *Twentieth Century Highlights of American Painting*, an exhibition of reproductions of forty works that was a follow-up to the successful *Highlights of American Painting*. Once again, the American Federation of Arts was responsible for the selection and this included works by the likes of Arshile Gorky and Jackson Pollock, as well as artists who had been at the centre of accusations of subversion, such as Ben Shahn. Moreover, half the essay in the catalogue (which was available in New Zealand) was given over to a discussion of developments in American art during the 1940s and 1950s. This exhibition, like its predecessor, existed in a number of copies and was toured extensively to a range of countries from the late 1950s into the 1960s. Indeed, Krenn argues that this exhibit "although made up entirely of reproductions, must be counted as one of the single

---

<sup>191</sup> USIS, Wellington to USIA, 21 November 1958, *ibid*.



most important undertakings in the history of America's international art program."<sup>192</sup> In New Zealand, the USIS circulated it to nineteen towns and cities from October 1958 to May 1960 and, in most instances, the display was arranged through the local art society.<sup>193</sup> The USIS certainly saw the value of the exhibition, relaying to the USIA that "it is obvious from the comments made that this exhibition is proving one of the most popular ever sent to New Zealand," and further stating that "this small-sized, well-mounted type of art display [is] ideal for New Zealand and of immeasurable value to good cultural relations."<sup>194</sup> In 1960, the USIS passed *Twentieth Century Highlights of American Painting* to the National Council of Adult Education, which toured it for two further years to a range of smaller centres. On returning the show to the USIS, P. Martin Smith, the secretary of the National Council of Adult Education, stated that it had "been most favourably received wherever it has been shown" with iterations of it being seen in forty-five towns, drawing around 30,000 viewers.<sup>195</sup> Combined with those who would have seen it on its initial circulation by the USIS, the number of visitors makes it possibly the most widely viewed exhibition of American art in New Zealand in the period I am investigating.

The role of the USIS in art-related interactions, however, quickly declined after 1958. This was first a result of funding issues, as suggested by William Phipps of the USIA (formerly of the Wellington USIS) in response to an enquiry from the New Zealand embassy in Washington in early 1958 regarding the possibility of arranging an exhibition of American paintings for New Zealand. Phipps wrote that this would be unlikely to happen, both because the USIA had recently sent an exhibition of such art in *Eight American Artists*, but also because "this was a bad budget year for the Agency."<sup>196</sup> Even so, at this stage the USIS in Wellington still envisioned that this aspect of its operations would be revived. Thus, when the public affairs officer at the Wellington USIS, James Pettus, wrote to Tomory in November 1958 in response to an enquiry on further exhibitions, he acknowledged the current difficulties being

---

<sup>192</sup> Krenn, *Fall-out Shelters for the Human Spirit*, 154.

<sup>193</sup> USIS Wellington to USIA, 22 September 1959 and 10 May 1960, New Zealand [folder 2/2], 1957-1959, Records Concerning Exhibits in Foreign Countries, RG306, NACP.

<sup>194</sup> USIS Wellington to USIA, 22 September 1959, *ibid.*

<sup>195</sup> P. Martin Smith to Thomas Driver, public affairs officer, 5 December 1962, New Zealand [folder 1/2], 1959-1966, Records Concerning Exhibits in Foreign Countries, RG306, NACP.

<sup>196</sup> This was relayed by G. D. L. White, counsellor at the New Zealand embassy, to the secretary of External Affairs in a letter dated 13 March 1958. ACGO, 8333, W2578, 158/373/3, Archives New Zealand (hereafter cited as ANZ).

experienced, but also expressed hope of continued USIS involvement in art exhibitions. As he wrote, “We do not seem to have any exhibits coming through in the immediate future that would be suitable for Gallery display but perhaps with USIS’s greater emphasis on cultural matters in 1959 will bring forth something worthwhile.”<sup>197</sup>

The USIA was also reluctant to support exhibitions of contemporary art, as demonstrated by its response, in April 1959, to an enquiry from the USIS about helping the ACAG bring in an exhibition from the San Francisco Art Bank to New Zealand, following a request from that gallery. It was in relation to this proposal that the USIA had recalled the “dubious acceptance” of *Eight American Artists*. The USIA refused to offer assistance for this show due to its cost and because they believed “that the proposed exhibit, undoubtedly entirely representative of the modern abstract-expressionist school of painting, would not satisfactorily promote our interests.”<sup>198</sup> Subsequently Tomory would stop soliciting the USIS for exhibitions. His last proposal, dated November 1959, was for a show of Lyonel Feininger work that the USIA refused.<sup>199</sup> By this stage, the USIS post in New Zealand was suffering a broader decline. This was made clear in a report that it submitted on the wider exhibits programme to the USIA in August 1960 that stated, “With the lack of funds, shortage of storage space and shortage of staff, USIS Wellington is not able to handle exhibits on any scale at all.”<sup>200</sup> This did not mean that the USIS in New Zealand eliminated art completely from its programme, but from this point through to about 1970 it played only a very limited role and had minimal impact.

To conclude, the US information programme in New Zealand had played a major role in the expansion of art-related interactions between the two countries. However, the value of New Zealand agency, the desire in New Zealand to expand cultural

---

<sup>197</sup> Pettus to Tomory, 21 November 1958, Information Files, HS 04/43, AAG Archives.

<sup>198</sup> USIA to USIS, Wellington, “Proposed Exhibit: San Francisco Art Association Art Bank,” NACP.

<sup>199</sup> Tomory to the cultural affairs officer, 30 November 1959; John Blake Lanum, public affairs officer, to Tomory, 15 January 1960. Information Files, HS 04/49, AAG Archives.

<sup>200</sup> USIS, Wellington to USIA, “IA-470 Statistical Report on Exhibits Program – January to June 1960,” 5 August 1960, 4, New Zealand [folder 1/2], 1959-1966, Records Concerning Exhibits in Foreign Countries, RG306, NACP. This was in reference to exhibits as a whole. The USIS in Wellington often toured exhibits relating to US scientific and technological advances, particularly with regard to its space programme.

relations with the United States and the role of local organisations in distributing material on behalf of the USIS should not be overlooked. While the reality was that the USIS's main period of impact in the arts was limited, it played a valuable part in exposing many New Zealanders to examples of modern American art for the first time. Moreover, that this was part of the larger cultural Cold War is emphasised by the close, albeit unplanned, juxtaposition of the exhibitions *Contemporary Soviet Art* and *Eight American Artists*. Moreover, Dr. Morley's visit to New Zealand would have important repercussions, which will be explored in the next chapter.

## **Chapter Two: The Auckland City Art Gallery and Its Role in Increasing Interactions, 1958-1963**

As mentioned in the introduction, Dr. Morley played a major, but generally overlooked, role in the 1958 trip to the United States by Colin McCahon. Morley's 1956 visit was also important in the establishment of a relationship between the Auckland City Art Gallery and the San Francisco Museum of Art, which would be a factor in two exhibitions that featured American art coming to New Zealand, the major group show *Painting from the Pacific* in 1961 and *Drawings from West Coast USA* in 1962. These interactions also clearly demonstrate the growing importance of New Zealand agency: McCahon's trip was an initiative of Tomory's, developed not long after his arrival in New Zealand, and the exhibitions were specifically organised by the ACAG.

### **Colin McCahon in the United States**

The visit by Colin McCahon to the United States in 1958 has been recognised as a decisive moment in his development as an artist and in New Zealand art history. As such, it has been discussed in some depth by art historians with the primary focus on exactly how McCahon's experiences in the United States impacted on his art practice.<sup>201</sup> It is not my intention to revisit these debates in any detail; instead, my main aim is to investigate other important aspects of McCahon's trip that have either been entirely neglected or have received only limited attention. In order to do so, I will look specifically at the trip's origins and development, the involvement of the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the importance and consequences of the visit for McCahon as a museum professional and in relation to the ACAG.

Tony Green was the first person to reconstruct some of the details of McCahon's trip, referencing McCahon's own recollections and those of his friends, and using

---

<sup>201</sup> See Gordon H. Brown and Hamish Keith, *An Introduction to New Zealand Painting, 1839-1980*, 2nd ed. (Auckland: Collins, 1982), 191-92; Tony Green, "McCahon's Visit to the United States: A Reading of Letters and Lecture Notes," *Bulletin of New Zealand Art History* 3 (1975): 19-42; Gordon H. Brown, *Colin McCahon: Artist*, rev. ed. (Auckland: Reed, 1993), 87-93; Peter Simpson, *Colin McCahon: The Titirangi Years, 1953-59* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2007), 23-41; Pound, *The Invention of New Zealand*, 260-70; Matthew Larking, "Reticence Despite Ratification: McCahon's take on Tessai," *The Journal of New Zealand Art History* 33 (2012-13): 44-59.

documents now held at the E. H. McCormick Research Library, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki: three letters and a postcard that McCahon wrote to the administrative assistant at the ACAG, Molly Ryburn; memoranda from Tomory to the town clerk, and the report that McCahon presented to the Auckland City Council on his return.<sup>202</sup> When Gordon Brown reconsidered the trip for his monograph on McCahon, he also referenced Anne McCahon’s journal of their visit and his own conversations with the McCahons. Francis Pound’s recent discussion is based on the same evidence, although it purports to represent a radical reinterpretation. My own research has accessed other sources of information not previously available or considered. First, McCahon himself kept a notebook during his travels which contains some of his thoughts on art, observations on various operational aspects of museums and the contact details and business cards of a number of American museum professionals, including directors, curators, and conservators.<sup>203</sup> I have also looked at the archives of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the CCNY, both of which hold correspondence to and from Morley in particular. The CCNY archives also hold McCahon’s final report to that organisation.

#### The genesis of the trip and the role of Dr. Morley

McCahon’s trip had its origins in Tomory’s desire to increase the professional level of the ACAG staff, a point which was first recognised by Tony Green. Similarly, that Morley played a role has been acknowledged, as has the fact that funding came from the CCNY.<sup>204</sup> However, the full details of how the trip developed have never been examined in detail. A letter from Tomory to Morley dated 28 September 1956, in which he asked for her help, provides important background details. In this, Tomory recounted that he had initially approached the United States Information Service with a scheme to send ACAG staff members to the United States, “in order to widen their experience in the visual arts, and also in Art Museum methods.”<sup>205</sup> However, as he further related, the USIS had advised him that, if some art museums in the United

---

<sup>202</sup> Green, “McCahon’s Visit to the United States,” 19.

<sup>203</sup> Colin McCahon, “Notebook of Colin and Anne McCahon’s trip to America in 1958,” Colin McCahon Artist File, Folder 36, AAG Archives.

<sup>204</sup> See, for example, Brown, *Colin McCahon: Artist*, 87.

<sup>205</sup> Tomory to Morley, 28 September 1956, Records from 1956, Box 123, Folder 4, Office of the Director 1935-58, Administrative Records, SFMoMA Archives.

States would act as sponsors, then it might be possible to organise funding through the Fulbright scheme to offset travel costs.

It was this that prompted him to write this letter to Morley (whom he had met on the day he arrived in Auckland), and also to the directors of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Worcester Art Museum in Massachusetts, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York. His hope was that these museums would take on a member of the ACAG's staff, at that stage consisting of Colin McCahon as curator and two student-assistants, at the rate of one a year, each for a short period, and provide them with a subsistence allowance. As Tomory further stated, his preference was for the United States as the destination because "there is no country nearer than the United States which can offer so much, both in professionally run Art Museums and in wealth of collections."<sup>206</sup> It is worth noting the sequence of these requests, and that his letter to Morley was preceded by his enquiry to the USIS – Tomory had not been in his position as director for very long when he began pursuing this idea. This demonstrates how proactive he was at the ACAG and also how serious he considered the lack of professional training available in New Zealand for gallery staff.

Tomory received responses from Morley and also at least Professor William Constable from Boston's Museum of Fine Arts.<sup>207</sup> Although I have no details regarding the latter, Morley proffered a considerable degree of support, providing thoughts on how Tomory's proposal could work and what different parts of the United States could offer, and stated that she would discuss the issue with colleagues.<sup>208</sup> This was in keeping with a general willingness to help people (as mentioned in the previous chapter), but she also recorded the significance of her fortuitous meeting with Tomory: "Perhaps I have the advantage of having met you on that morning of your arrival, even if so briefly, and of knowing your Gallery and the situation there in Auckland and in the rest of New Zealand. It gives an added point to your request."<sup>209</sup> Consequently, Morley wrote to the other institutions that Tomory had sent letters to, and she also contacted the CCNY to ask if they would be able to

---

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> I do not have details of Constable's reply. My only evidence for this comes from a letter from Tomory to Morley dated 24 October 1956, Records from 1956, Box 123, Folder 4, Office of the Director 1935-58, Administrative Records, SFMoMA Archives.

<sup>208</sup> Morley to Tomory, 16 October 1956, *ibid.*

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

help with funding. One of its staff members, Margaret Mahoney, replied to Morley on 21 November 1956 and suggested the CCNY Commonwealth Travel Grant Program as a possible avenue. She also noted, “We would be particularly interested in the educational aspect of museum work so that a person who wanted to come here to observe our techniques in museum education might be favorably considered.”<sup>210</sup> Morley communicated this possibility to Tomory, although nothing further on this front developed immediately.

Subsequently, Tomory informed Morley that he had secured the possibility of getting funds for travel, so that the main issue was finding money for subsistence costs in the United States.<sup>211</sup> It is unclear what Tomory’s potential source of funding was, but as a result of this, Morley wrote in May 1957 to Stephen Stackpole, who was responsible for the CCNY Commonwealth Program, to ask his advice on how the scheme could be supported. She outlined the full proposal, its wider context in relation to the museum and art gallery situation in New Zealand and Australia, her own efforts in trying to bring it to fruition, and finally her belief in its value:

It is a modest thing, but it seems to me that it is one of those projects where a modest investment would eventually produce an immense return over a long period of time. I have the feeling that in New Zealand it would mark a turning point in general culture as well as art.<sup>212</sup>

As part of this letter, she also enclosed details of the three staff members of the ACAG: McCahon and student-assistants John Henderson and Peter Webb.<sup>213</sup> In his reply, Stackpole wrote that McCahon “would be a very natural candidate” and suggested to Morley that he apply directly to the CCNY.<sup>214</sup>

---

<sup>210</sup> Mahoney to Morley, 21 November 1956, Records from 1956, Box 123, Folder 4, Office of the Director 1935-58, Administrative Records, SFMoMA Archives.

<sup>211</sup> Unfortunately neither the SFMoMA or AAG archives have retained any of the correspondence between Morley and Tomory for 1957. However, the holdings of the CCNY have some of this, as well as correspondence from Morley and the ACAG to the CCNY, which allows for this reconstruction. Tomory’s statement regarding funding was relayed by Morley to Stackpole in a letter dated 14 May 1957, Series III A Box 675, CCNY Archives.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Details on each of these had been supplied to Morley by Tomory in a letter dated 20 December 1956, Records from 1956, Box 123, Folder 4, Office of the Director 1935-58, Administrative Records, SFMoMA Archives.

<sup>214</sup> Stackpole to Morley, 6 June 1957, Series III A Box 675, CCNY Archives.

Morley now put together a possible itinerary for McCahon, suggesting that he spend a month in San Francisco, including at least two weeks working in various departments of the SFMA, three weeks visiting institutions in the West and mid-West and five to six weeks on the East Coast. As part of this, she listed various institutions that he should see and noted the particular areas of value for some of these, such as their collections or educational programmes. As she summarised,

In this schedule all the greatest art collections can be seen and all the most important types of art museums and their services can be observed and intimate experience of those most pertinent and helpful can be arranged. All the techniques, including records, registration, conservation, etc., can be included.<sup>215</sup>

McCahon submitted this itinerary with his application to the CCNY,<sup>216</sup> and on 3 December 1957 the CCNY sent a letter confirming that this had been successful and stating that the grant would provide funds for McCahon and his wife for travel and living costs in the United States.<sup>217</sup> However, there had been some miscommunication between Tomory and Morley with regard to funding, for Tomory was under the impression that the CCNY would also pay for travel to and from the United States.<sup>218</sup> But the CCNY would not pay this additional cost, so Tomory asked the ACC to meet this expense.<sup>219</sup> Fortunately the Council agreed to do so, and the McCahons left Auckland for San Francisco (via Hawaii) on 4 April 1958.

### Understanding the involvement of the Carnegie Corporation of New York

As discussed in the previous chapter, the CCNY had a history of cultural activity in New Zealand. However, in the two decades following World War II, it had shifted its focus away from culture and the arts and more specifically towards education and the social sciences. This affected its operations in the British colonies and dominions. For New Zealand, the CCNY primarily provided travel grants, although it did also supply

---

<sup>215</sup> Morley to Tomory, 7 September 1957, *ibid.*

<sup>216</sup> McCahon to executive assistant, British Dominions and Colonies Program, 23 September 1957, *ibid.*

<sup>217</sup> CCNY to McCahon, 3 December 1957, *ibid.*

<sup>218</sup> This was recorded at a meeting of the Parks and Libraries Committee (the ACC committee now responsible for the ACAG) held on 8 July 1957. Minutes, Auckland City Council Parks and Libraries Committee (hereafter cited as Minutes, ACC PLC), 8 July 1957, 2, Minute Book 1957, ACC 109, Item 1, AC Archives.

<sup>219</sup> Minutes, ACC PLC, 17 February 1958, 2, Minute Book 1958, ACC 109, Item 2, AC Archives.



a number of book sets to libraries on US history and culture.<sup>220</sup> The majority of travel grants went to university teaching and administrative staff, although there were exceptions.<sup>221</sup> Of note, too, is that it gave travel grants to several Australians involved in museums and galleries. For example, in 1955 Robert Campbell, director of the National Gallery of South Australia (now the Art Gallery of South Australia), was provided with funding to study collections, display, restoration techniques and educational services of art museums in the United States. The interest shown by the CCNY in Tomory's project to send ACAG staff to the United States was thus perfectly congruent with both the history of its activities in New Zealand and the current operation of its Commonwealth Travel Grant Program. However, it can also be read in relation to the Cold War aims of the United States.

After the conclusion of World War II, and within the new Cold War paradigm, the CCNY maintained its relationship with the US government and played a role within the broader foreign policy matrix aimed at combatting the USSR and the perceived threat of Communism.<sup>222</sup> As a result, the CCNY also viewed its activities in the British dominions and colonies to some extent in Cold War terms. They were concerned with preserving good relations, presenting a positive image of the United States, and extending its influence and structures. As John W. Gardner, president of the CCNY from 1955 to 1965, wrote in a 1956 report on the objectives of the Commonwealth Program:

We begin with the conviction that whatever we do should in the long view make a positive contribution to the strength and vitality of the free world. Within this context we seek to strengthen – in the best and broadest sense of that word – the national life and democratic institutions of the independent countries of the Commonwealth, and to develop the foundations of a sound social order in the colonial areas.<sup>223</sup>

---

<sup>220</sup> See Stackpole, *Carnegie Corporation Commonwealth Program*, 18-19 and 65-66 for a list of New Zealand libraries that received these sets.

<sup>221</sup> All New Zealanders who received travel grants from the CCNY from 1947 to 1962 are listed in Stephen H. Stackpole, *Carnegie Corporation Commonwealth Travel Grants, 1947-1962* (New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1963), 46-58. For example, the poet Allen Curnow received a grant in 1949 to travel to the United States to study creative writing.

<sup>222</sup> See, for example, Inderjeet Parmar, *Foundations of the American Century: The Ford, Carnegie, and Rockefeller Foundations in the Rise of American Power*, 97-100. For a more benign view of CCNY Cold War activities, see Lagemann, *The Politics of Knowledge*, 147-48.

<sup>223</sup> John W. Gardner, "The Corporation's Program in the Commonwealth," 16 November 1956, 2, Series I D Box 4, CCNY Archives.

And later in this report he stated,

the Commonwealth, together with the United States, constitutes the most important combination of powers, East and West, of the free world. Furthermore, this combination of powers is one with which the United States must maintain relationships of mutual understanding and trust.<sup>224</sup>

Within the context of the Cold War, then, McCahon's trip also functioned as an opportunity both to promote knowledge and understanding of the United States and its culture, and to encourage positive relations and support.

### Reconstructing McCahon's trip

Based on my own research, the previous reconstructions of McCahon's itinerary by Green and Brown are relatively accurate. The most complete evidence I have uncovered is a typed itinerary up to New York and a handwritten list thereafter from the CCNY archives.<sup>225</sup> The handwritten list does suggest, however, that the McCahons visited more places following their departure from Boston than previously recognised. The McCahons arrived in San Francisco on 6 April, where they spent around two weeks. On 18 April they travelled to Denver, then Kansas City, St Louis, Cincinnati and Charleston, arriving in that city at the end of April to attend the American Association of Museums Conference. What has not been recorded previously is that, as result of contacts made there, McCahon expanded his programme to include a variety of smaller cities with populations of a similar size to Auckland. After Charleston, and their ten-day visit to Washington, DC, on 5 May, they proceeded up the East Coast, stopping at Baltimore and Philadelphia, then New York from around 22 May to 9 June. From New York, the McCahons travelled at a faster pace, often staying only one or two nights in each place they visited. They went to New Haven, Hartford and Worcester before arriving in Boston, where they spent a week. After this, they travelled to Utica, Buffalo, Cleveland, Toledo, Detroit, Chicago, Minneapolis, Bismarck, Butte, Spokane, Seattle, Portland, Newport and Eureka, before returning to San Francisco around 20 July. They departed by boat from San Francisco on 31 July and arrived back in Auckland on 16 August.

---

<sup>224</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>225</sup> "Colin McCahon," undated document, Series III A Box 675, CCNY Archives.

Green in particular also used the evidence available to him to offer some examination of how McCahon approached the trip as an employee of the ACAG, and some of the ideas that he developed, particularly around museum education.<sup>226</sup> However, once again, previously unexamined sources can be used to construct a fuller analysis of the visit from this perspective. As McCahon recorded in his report to the ACC, in total he “visited about 63 art galleries, 100 dealer galleries and private collections, talked with directors, museum staffs and artists.”<sup>227</sup> In his report to the CCNY, sent on 25 February 1960, he gave additional details, noting that he visited “an impressive array of children’s museums, art centres, art schools and university art departments, also numbers of natural history and science museums.”<sup>228</sup> During his initial stay in San Francisco, McCahon worked closely with the staff of the SFMA, and this allowed him “to study their methods of working and the organisation of the museum.”<sup>229</sup> He also jotted down in his notebook some brief observations (accompanied by drawings) on such topics as lighting and display, gallery furniture, the best type of wall finish, advertising and publicity.<sup>230</sup> Likewise, he showed a concern with security, as he expressed in a letter to Molly Ryburn in which he discussed the security system at the Cleveland Art Museum.<sup>231</sup> In addition, McCahon showed considerable interest in the educational function of US art museums, recording thoughts on museum education in his notebook, including ideas related to the audience for art and how to engage more people. He looked out for the ways museums attempted to connect with their audiences and was also concerned with how to encourage the involvement of younger people.<sup>232</sup> This interest in the educational role of museums would subsequently be a feature of his report to the ACC, to be examined in more detail later.

---

<sup>226</sup> See Green, “McCahon’s Visit to the United States,” 19-22.

<sup>227</sup> Colin McCahon, “To the Committee Members of the Parks and Library Committee on My Return from Visiting Galleries in the United States,” 24 September 1958, 2, Minutes, ACC PLC, 29 September 1958, Attachment AA, Minute Book 1958, ACC 109, Item 2, AC Archives.

<sup>228</sup> Colin McCahon, “Notes on a Visit to Study Art Museum and Museum Practice in the United States,” Series III A Box 675, CCNY Archives.

<sup>229</sup> McCahon, “To the Committee Members of the Parks and Library Committee,” AC Archives.

<sup>230</sup> See especially, McCahon, “Notebook,” [1-3], Colin McCahon Artist File, Folder 36, AAG Archives.

<sup>231</sup> McCahon to Ryburn, 28 June 1958. Cited in Green, “McCahon’s Visit to the United States,” 24.

<sup>232</sup> For example, he listed some of the ways in which the St Louis Art Museum promoted the participation of children. See McCahon, “Notebook,” [29], AAG Archives.

Another key aim of the trip was to build up contacts with staff at American institutions and to solicit exhibitions, and McCahon's notebook lists the numerous contacts that he made. In this, there are notes to send New Zealand material to various museums or to exchange publications, and in some cases he had clearly discussed the idea of obtaining or exchanging exhibitions. For example, he was hopeful that the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston might compile an exhibition to send to Auckland,<sup>233</sup> and also recorded that the Denver Art Museum "will exchange Indian for Maori."<sup>234</sup> Given that the ACAG did not collect Māori art or artefacts, it is likely that the impetus for such requests came from the US institutions, which were no doubt interested in such objects because they represented what was most unique about New Zealand.<sup>235</sup> McCahon also noted the possibility of exchanges with the Smithsonian Institution, though no details are recorded.<sup>236</sup> In addition, he wrote reminders to send catalogues to, for example, the Albright Art Gallery in Buffalo, and exchange publications with the St Louis City Art Museum, and recorded that the latter might be interested in an exchange show.<sup>237</sup> His notes even extended to private galleries – the Delacorte gallery in New York, for example, had asked for New Zealand material for an exhibition, though he did not specify what this might have been.<sup>238</sup> Finally, McCahon gave some consideration to the purchase of modern European art works, particularly in New York where he visited numerous dealer galleries.<sup>239</sup>

#### Outcomes: McCahon as art gallery professional

First, McCahon did not make any purchases on behalf of the ACAG, although on his return to San Francisco he personally bought a work by Karl Kasten entitled *Fragment of Autumn*, 1954 (figure 10), which he subsequently gifted to the ACAG. Significantly, this was the first piece of modern American art to enter the ACAG's collection. In terms of soliciting exhibitions, McCahon had little success, as none

---

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., [9].

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., [18].

<sup>235</sup> That American art museums had an interest in displaying such material is shown by the 1946 MoMA exhibition *Arts of the South Seas*, and the 1953 exhibition *Art of the South Pacific* that was put together by San Francisco's M. H. de Young Memorial Museum. The latter included twenty-one Māori works sourced from other US museums.

<sup>236</sup> McCahon, "Notebook," [79].

<sup>237</sup> Ibid., [11]; *ibid.*, [69].

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., [54].

<sup>239</sup> Green, "McCahon's Visit to the United States," 23.

would be sent to New Zealand as result of his trip. He did have some contact with the San Francisco Art Association Art Bank, which offered an exhibition of contemporary West Coast American art to the ACAG in February 1959.<sup>240</sup> However, as noted in the previous chapter, the ACAG did not have the resources to bring the exhibition to New Zealand without some financial assistance, and its approach to the USIS was rebuffed. However, as will be explored, McCahon's trip would be important for the conception of the exhibition *Painting from the Pacific*, and was also valuable in terms of developing an institutional relationship with the SFMA that would lead to that museum's involvement in both *Painting from the Pacific* and another exhibition, *Drawings from West Coast USA*, that came to New Zealand in 1962.

McCahon's trip also presented him with the opportunity to expand his professional knowledge and develop a greater understanding of the art gallery as an institution. His time at the SFMA was the most valuable portion of the trip in this sense, as he was able to spend a sustained period of time observing how an American art museum operated. The size of the SFMA was also important. As McCahon wrote in his report to the CCNY, a focus solely on large American art museums, such as the National Gallery in Washington, DC, or the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, would have presented him with a distorted view, so that

from the point of learning much of real value in administration applicable to a gallery of our own size and financial position, museums of the size and scope of the San Francisco Museum of Art and the Denver Art Museum proved of greater value as active stimulants to rethinking our own problems of organisation than did any of the larger institutions.<sup>241</sup>

From this perspective, the expansion of his itinerary following the American Association of Museums Conference in Charleston was significant. As he wrote in his later report to the CCNY, by visiting art museums in smaller cities more comparable to Auckland, he was able "to see what they were accomplishing, and to see how, with resources more like our own, they both arranged their programme of exhibitions and

---

<sup>240</sup> Fred Martin, Art Bank administrator, to McCahon, 20 February 1959, New Zealand [folder 2/2], 1957-1959, Records Concerning Exhibits in Foreign Countries, RG306, NACP.

<sup>241</sup> McCahon, "Notes on a Visit," 2, CCNY Archives.

activities and made these programmes attractive to the community.”<sup>242</sup> This exposed McCahon to a wider context against which to judge how the ACAG functioned, and he believed that it measured up favourably. Indeed, comparing the operation of the ACAG to art museums in the United States was another major aspect of his report to the ACC:

We were, time after time, impressed by how much was actually accomplished in the Auckland Gallery by relatively so few people, and also by the good physical appearance of our galleries which apart from the entrance and immediate exterior, stand comparison very well with a number of galleries of similar size, and usually in cities of much larger population in the States.<sup>243</sup>

As noted, McCahon had also paid particular attention to museum education during his trip. It should be recognised that McCahon had already been involved in aspects of art education prior to this. On occasion he had given lectures at the ACAG, and from 1954 he had been involved with the University of Auckland Adult Education Centre as a tutor, although this was in relation to art making.<sup>244</sup> It is thus not surprising that McCahon showed an interest in how art museums in the United States sought to educate the public. And in his report to the ACC he particularly emphasised his belief in the importance of education and the need for the ACAG to engage more people:

I feel strongly that it is becoming essential in Auckland to introduce a larger section of the community to the Gallery – now that the actual collection is so greatly improved by recent Mackelvie and city purchases – by more lectures, gallery tours, ‘do it yourself’ classes for both adults and probably still more importantly, for children and young adults. This is important both to satisfy an increasing interest in painting and sculpture and to try to raise the general standard of visual appreciation in relation to our own environment, Auckland City, which, having probably one of the world’s most beautiful sites is one of the least attractive looking cities I have seen, made so, largely by the lack of visual sensibility in the bulk of the citizens.<sup>245</sup>

McCahon’s views may also have been influenced by his contact with Dr. Morley. Education had long been an accepted part of the US art museum’s remit and was an

---

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>243</sup> McCahon, “To the Committee Members of the Parks and Library Committee,” 1, AC Archives. That McCahon did believe that the ACAG compared favourably (and was not presenting it in this way for the benefit of the ACC) is backed up by his use of similar comments in his later report to the CCNY.

<sup>244</sup> See Simpson, *Colin McCahon*, 20.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 1-2.

integral part of Morley's own museum philosophy and the operations of the SFMA. As she stated in an interview conducted in 1960, "In a way we feel that everything an art museum does that serves the public is education in a very profound sense."<sup>246</sup> This likely had some impact on McCahon. At the very least, his trip would have helped him to crystallise his thoughts on this matter, as well as providing concrete examples of how to run an education programme that promoted greater public engagement with art.

No doubt as a result of McCahon's observations, after his return from the United States the ACAG instituted a comprehensive programme of events aimed at educating the public in art. This was first signalled by Tomory in a letter to the town clerk that was presented at a meeting of the Parks and Libraries Committee on 28 October 1958.<sup>247</sup> In this, he reported that, as the major renovations to the gallery had been completed, it was now possible to run a more active extra-mural programme. He proposed a range of practical art courses, and two tours a week by members of staff on various aspects of the permanent collection and on exhibitions. He also suggested that they might experiment by opening late one night a week. These measures were approved, and were detailed in an article in the *New Zealand Herald*.<sup>248</sup> The ACAG further expanded these activities in 1960, and McCahon provided an outline of the new programme in the first *Quarterly* publication of that year. Two of the practical art classes were replaced by lectures on "many of the directions and aspects of art," and a children's holiday club was started "to provide children with a brief but more intensive introduction to various art forms and mediums and to interest them in the Art Gallery and its collections."<sup>249</sup> The ACAG also now produced brochures for the public outlining these programmes, at least for the years 1960 to 1962. In 1961 a season of art films was added, as well as a series called "Artists on Art," which consisted of six illustrated lectures, each by a different Auckland artist.

---

<sup>246</sup> Grace McCann Morley, *Art, Artists, Museums, and the San Francisco Museum of Art*, an oral history conducted 1960, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1960, 201-2.

<sup>247</sup> Tomory to the town clerk, 17 October 1958, Minutes, ACC PLC, 28 October 1958, Attachment GA, Minute Book 1958, ACC 109, Item 2, AC Archives.

<sup>248</sup> "New Move to Stimulate Interest in Art," *NZH*, 30 October 1958.

<sup>249</sup> C.McC [Colin McCahon], "Painting Classes," *Auckland City Art Gallery Quarterly* 12, 1960, 3. The *Quarterly* began in 1956, and was one of Tomory's early initiatives.

It is also apparent, however, that McCahon's views on both education and where the value of his US trip lay evolved over time. The evidence for this is the report on his trip that he submitted to the CCNY in February 1960, eighteen months after his return to New Zealand. In contrast to his report to the ACC, in this report he placed greater importance on his exposure to higher standards both of art and its presentation within the gallery context and now questioned an overemphasis on education:

The large and important museums provided standards, clearly stating what an art museum could be, what great painting really looked like. They were in fact the most important places we visited, as the setting of the standards and the understanding and appreciation of painting is of first importance to any art museum officer – it is surely the discrimination and judgement applied to both collecting and exhibiting a collection and not the method of administering and even educating that makes a museum great, less great, or just dull. I feel that this primary function is sometimes overlooked usually through education becoming a museum's dominant function, and through the failure to recognise that a great or even good painting can perform this function often much better than a teacher or a guide book.<sup>250</sup>

This suggests that the programmes created by the ACAG following his return did not have the effect he had hoped for. Instead, he had come to view his individual experience as the most important aspect of his trip:

By the provision of a heightened standard to a few individuals in any community a greater awareness of a higher standard does eventually become apparent to, and accepted by, increasingly more people in that community. It is in this way that I hope the great good I feel I derived from my visit to the United States will become known, rather than through any immediate changes made in the more direct sphere of my work in the Auckland Art Gallery.<sup>251</sup>

McCahon, then, also saw a large part of the potential value of his trip in spreading knowledge about his experiences in order to raise local artistic standards, and a key aspect of this was his first-hand contact with modern American art.

### Outcomes: McCahon and modern American painting

---

<sup>250</sup> McCahon, "Notes on a Visit," 2, CCNY Archives.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.



As noted, discussions of McCahon's trip have centred on its impact on his own practice. That there was an important change is generally agreed upon, although there has been debate over the question of the particular role played by modern American art within this.<sup>252</sup> Although I find his polemical approach problematic,<sup>253</sup> I would tend to follow Pound's argument for the significance of McCahon's exposure to modern American art in the changes that occurred in his work. This is backed up by McCahon's own statement at a lecture in May 1963 that he felt that the *Northland Panels*, painted not long after his return from the States, "unleashed 'a flood of US type painting' " in New Zealand.<sup>254</sup> This suggests that through his artwork McCahon was able to convey something of his personal experience of modern American painting to New Zealand audiences and other New Zealand artists, making them aware of a wider range of artistic possibilities. Moreover, McCahon now became the acknowledged expert in modern American art at the ACAG and sought to spread knowledge about such art, having brought back a selection of slides which he used to give lectures on his return.<sup>255</sup>

McCahon also developed a particular interest in West Coast painting. This is especially noteworthy given that, in a global sense, art from that region tended to be

---

<sup>252</sup> For example, although Green acknowledged West Coast painting as a stimulus, he claimed that there was "no 'profound' influence from American art" as McCahon "did not see very much of the current art of the centre, New York (and Washington)." Green, "McCahon's Visit to the United States," 19. Subsequently, Gordon Brown presented a greater acknowledgement of the impact of modern American painting on McCahon, although with caveats. See especially Brown, *McCahon: Artist*, 93-94. Most recently, Pound has forcefully asserted its importance. See especially Pound, *The Invention of New Zealand*, 267-69.

<sup>253</sup> Pound's account was written to oppose the views of Green and Brown, but he misrepresents the previous literature to some extent, particularly Brown's contribution. For example, he conflates the writings of Green and Brown, using them selectively and interchangeably to make particular points that he ascribes to a Nationalist agenda designed to maintain a McCahon "unsullied by the foreign." Pound, *The Invention of New Zealand*, 261.

<sup>254</sup> "McCahon: Rough Notes of an Address Given to A.U. 'Little' Congress, Hunua, May 1963 [notes by Wystan Curnow]" cited in Green, "McCahon's Visit to the United States," 31. It is unclear exactly what artists McCahon might have been referring to here, but possible candidates include Jean Horsley, Alwyn Lasenby, Freda Simmonds and Kase Jackson. At the same time, McCahon may have been overstating his own influence. For example, in the same year that he travelled to the United States an exhibition that toured New Zealand, entitled *British Abstract Painting*, contained a variety of Tachiste-style works, some of large scale and featuring expressive brushwork. This, too, has been recognised as having an important impact on New Zealand artists. See, for example, Keith and Brown, *An Introduction to New Zealand Painting*, 174.

<sup>255</sup> Information on the slides comes from Green, "McCahon's Visit to the United States," 24-25. He also records that Tim Garrity recalls a slide show of these at which McCahon "was enthusiastic about de Kooning, Diebenkorn and Pollock." *Ibid.*, 25. McCahon gave at least one set of lectures on his trip, probably using the slides, in Kaitaia in November 1958. Tomory to the town clerk, 9 December 1958, Information Files, HS 04/43, AAG Archives. He also spoke of modern American paintings in other lectures that he gave. See Green, "McCahon's Visit to the United States," 26-31.

overlooked in favour of developments coming out of New York, which was increasingly being recognised as home to the most dynamic and radical experimentation in art. McCahon himself acknowledged the importance of art from the West Coast, and particularly the work of Richard Diebenkorn on his own practice, a point explored by art historians.<sup>256</sup> There were, however, wider effects. It is significant that the artwork that McCahon purchased and then gifted to the ACAG, *Fragment of Autumn*, was a recent painting by a West Coast artist, Karl Kasten. The discussion of this work, almost certainly by McCahon, in the ACAG's *Quarterly* publication is revealing. This described the work as

at once representative of the abstract expressionist movement which developed in the United States after the war and at the same time following the direction of much American West Coast abstract expressionist painting in that distinctly regional figurative and atmospheric elements are used.<sup>257</sup>

As Pound argues, *Fragment of Autumn* represented the type of art that McCahon wanted to promote. He calls it “a painting of the McCahon kind” and states further that “what pleased above all was its regionalism – a regionalism that did not ignore but *used* the new abstraction, a regionalism at once up-to-the-minute *and* localising.”<sup>258</sup> I would suggest that McCahon's interest in West Coast art was strongly motivated by the idea that it could act as some kind of model for New Zealand artists, based on a belief that West Coast artists had managed to incorporate new artistic developments, such as Abstract Expressionism, into their practice while still retaining a sense of place and a regional distinctiveness.

I would further propose that McCahon's thoughts in this direction were likely stimulated by both Tomory and Morley. First, as Courtney Johnston explores in her thesis, Tomory's art historical approach was “informed by a belief in the regional nature of art,”<sup>259</sup> and no doubt he discussed such ideas with McCahon. Second, Morley believed that the work of artists from the US West Coast was different from the art of the rest of the country, and may well have passed these views on to

---

<sup>256</sup> This point was first made by Keith and Brown in *An Introduction to New Zealand Painting*, 191-92. See also, in particular, Brown, *Colin McCahon: Artist*, 93-94.

<sup>257</sup> “Karl Kasten,” *Auckland City Art Gallery Quarterly* 10, 1959, 3.

<sup>258</sup> Pound, *The Invention of New Zealand*, 266.

<sup>259</sup> Johnston, “Peter Tomory,” 64.

McCahon during his time in San Francisco. In an interview conducted in 1960, as part of a discussion about modern American art, Suzanne B. Riess had asked Morley: “do you think the San Francisco artist, as had been suggested, being an abstract expressionist, would be at home anywhere?”<sup>260</sup> Morley replied that she thought they would, then added,

But there is an interesting point here: does art of San Francisco, of the Pacific Coast, show some regional stamp within abstraction? I’ve had the question raised a number of times when Europeans have for the first time seen work done on the West Coast. These Europeans had been familiar with art done in New York to a certain extent, and they, when they saw work by artists of the Pacific Coast, did feel something different, and inquired about it.<sup>261</sup>

She went on to argue that “there is a certain quality that comes from the place,” although she did not see this as being related to light “because the light is quite different in Seattle from the light in San Francisco.”<sup>262</sup> Instead, Morley felt that this was related to the distinctive landscape of the West Coast, in particular its space and scale; as she said, “it’s a possibility that interests me and I have talked to people about it.”<sup>263</sup>

McCahon’s trip certainly led to a desire to show West Coast art at the ACAG. This is first suggested by one of Tomory’s letters to the USIS in which he expressed his hope that the United States Information Agency would send out another exhibition of American art, noting that “the serious artistic community in New Zealand is exceptionally interested in American painting – particularly the West Coast variety.”<sup>264</sup> Nothing would come of this, but art from the West Coast would be a key feature of the 1961 exhibition *Painting from the Pacific*. Importantly, too, McCahon’s trip combined with the regionalist conception of art mentioned above would be key factors in its development. However, before looking in detail at this exhibition, I will briefly consider three interactions that demonstrate that the interest in the United States and its art was not confined to the ACAG.

---

<sup>260</sup> Morley, *Art, Artists, Museums, and the San Francisco Museum of Art*, 100.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, 100-101.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>264</sup> Tomory to John Blake Lanum, USIS public affairs officer, 19 January 1960, Information Files, HS 04/49, AAG Archives.

### Other interactions

McCahon was not the only New Zealand art gallery professional to travel to the United States in 1958. In that same year, both Stewart MacLennan, director of the NAG, and Mrs. J. William Foreman, director of the Waikato Art Gallery, also went there. Foreman arrived before McCahon (she was in New York in May 1958), and MacLennan passed through the United States just after him, in September. I have uncovered very few details on Foreman's visit, but MacLennan's had a similar purpose to McCahon's, "to study modern methods of administration and display and to become familiar with recent trends in painting overseas."<sup>265</sup> However, it was a wider tour with Europe and Britain as its primary destinations; MacLennan only spent two weeks of his four-month tour in the United States, where he visited New York, Washington, Chicago and San Francisco. Nevertheless, that the United States was included on these itineraries was important, signalling a growing recognition of the cultural value of that country, specifically its art and art institutions. Moreover, both MacLennan and Foreman had discussions with MoMA regarding exhibitions of American art for New Zealand.<sup>266</sup> These inquiries would be a factor in the decision of MoMA's International Program to include New Zealand in the tour of its exhibition *Contemporary American Printmaking* in 1959. As it developed, however, it would be the Adult Education Centre in New Zealand that would be responsible for touring this show in New Zealand (once again through the Community Arts Service).<sup>267</sup>

*Contemporary American Printmaking* was assembled by William Lieberman, MoMA's curator of prints, and the International Program described it as follows:

---

<sup>265</sup> National Art Gallery and Dominion Museum annual report, *AJHR*, 1958, H21, 10.

<sup>266</sup> During her stay in New York, Foreman met with Helen Franc, a staff member of MoMA's International Program. Franc to Waldo Rasmussen, undated note, International Council and International Program Records (IC/IP), I.A.86, MoMA Archives, NY. A note from Rasmussen dated 9 September 1958 recorded MacLennan's visit and his interest in obtaining exhibitions, specifically *Contemporary American Printmaking*. Ibid.

<sup>267</sup> In a separate inquiry, the director of the Adult Education Centre, S. R. Morrison, wrote to Porter McCray, the man in charge of MoMA's International Program, on 18 July 1958 to inquire about bringing the show to New Zealand after he had become aware that it was on display in Australia. Ibid.

[the exhibition] traces the chief developments in printmaking in the United States in the postwar period.... [The prints] indicate the extraordinary renaissance taking place in printmaking today and demonstrate several characteristics of recent American prints: an increasing emphasis on large scale, the frequent use of color, and experimentation followed by technical innovations.<sup>268</sup>

There were forty works, dating from the mid-1940s to the early 1950s, by thirty-two artists. Most of these were well-known as printmakers and included Leonard Baskin, Ralston Crawford, Antonio Frasconi, Seong Moy, Gabor Peterdi, Andre Racz, Louis Schanker and Adja Yunkers. The exhibition was displayed in Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga, Gisborne and Wellington in the first half of 1959. While not especially radical, it is notable as the first exhibition from MoMA's International Program to be sent to New Zealand and demonstrates the wider interest in American art amongst New Zealand individuals, institutions and organisations. However, at this stage, the ACAG would continue to be the main driver of interactions with the United States, as clearly seen through *Painting from the Pacific*.

### ***Painting from the Pacific***

This exhibition brought together works from the US West Coast, Japan, Australia and New Zealand, and toured to Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin and Wellington in 1961. It was significant both as the first international exhibition organised by the ACAG and the first based on a specific hypothesis. My main concern here is with the West Coast selection. This was chosen by the SFMA and represented a variety of recent trends in the art of that region. As noted, the wider conception of the exhibition also owed much to McCahon's trip to the United States, and can further be read in relation to New Zealand's changing position in the world, including its relationship with the United States.

#### The premise behind the exhibition

In his foreword to the catalogue, Tomory wrote that exhibitions at the ACAG over the previous few years from each of the four countries represented in *Painting from the*

---

<sup>268</sup> McCray to the director, Society of Arts, Hamilton, 29 July 1958, *ibid.*

*Pacific* had demonstrated that “amongst these artists and our own there seemed to lie a certain homogeneity – a sympathetic link, perhaps intangible, and certainly indefinable.”<sup>269</sup> Tomory continued that, to this end, the aim of this exhibition was

to bring all four regions together in order to see whether the Pacific provided some common characteristic: perhaps light, or topography, or perhaps again, some indefinable element. It is with this in mind that the paintings have been selected.<sup>270</sup>

That these ideas owed something to McCahon’s experience in the United States is suggested by his comment in a letter to Molly Ryburn from San Francisco in 1958: “I am told that S.F. is not like the rest of the country but a very different place. I think there is definitely something in common in Pacific Cities that makes the difference. I shall know when I’ve been East...”<sup>271</sup> Moreover, as Courtney Johnston records, following his return to New Zealand, McCahon “spoke of his curiosity as to whether the art produced in countries bordering on the Pacific might share any similar elements.”<sup>272</sup> As discussed, such thoughts may have in part been stimulated through conversation with Morley, and they also dovetailed with Tomory’s own art historical approach, which included the central idea that environment exerted a strong influence on the art of a country or region.<sup>273</sup>

In a wider sense, this conception also reflected the growing recognition in New Zealand that it was part of a broader Pacific region. As Wylan Curnow wrote in his review of the exhibition in *Landfall*:

We are told today that the world has grown smaller, that we are increasingly aware of belonging to regions larger than the nation state; that we in New Zealand have recovered from our invidious ‘Home’-sickness and that we no longer feel ourselves in isolation from Europe but more and more akin to the

---

<sup>269</sup> Peter Tomory, foreword to *Painting from the Pacific: Japan, America, Australia, New Zealand*, by Auckland City Art Gallery (Auckland: Pelorus Press, 1961), [3]. The exhibitions Tomory was referring to were *Contemporary Australian Painting* (1957), *Eight American Artists* (1958), *Contemporary Japanese Art* (1959) and *Contemporary Australian Art* (1960).

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>271</sup> McCahon to Molly Ryburn, 12 April 1958, cited in Tony Green, “McCahon’s Visit to the United States,” 22.

<sup>272</sup> Gordon H. Brown, personal communication to Courtney Johnston, 19 January 2004, quoted in Johnston, “Peter Tomory,” 104.

<sup>273</sup> See *ibid.*, 60-65.

Pacific nations represented in the exhibition. These nations already acknowledge a political inter-dependence, do they recognize a cultural one?<sup>274</sup>

From this perspective, *Painting from the Pacific* operated as an indicator of New Zealand's changing notion of itself as a Pacific nation. The reality of its geographic position, and its vulnerability, had been brought home by Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor and then its rapid advance south that culminated in the fall of Singapore in February 1942. Post-World War II, the New Zealand government recognised this through its pursuit of a security agreement with the United States, formalised through the ANZUS pact. Within this new paradigm, the United States and Australia were important regional allies, and New Zealand was also expanding its contacts with Japan. In April 1952 the peace treaty with that country came into force, and from this point trade relations with Japan steadily increased. As a result New Zealand's attitude to that country gradually developed away from fear and suspicion towards an emphasis on the benefits to be gained from closer relations.<sup>275</sup>

In this context, *Painting from the Pacific* was a reflection of New Zealand's changing recognition of its place in the world away from Britain and towards an Asia-Pacific region. Arif Dirlik's argument that "the Pacific" does not exist as an objective reality, but rather is a notion that shifts according to time, place and historical circumstance, is also relevant here. As he stated,

In a fundamental sense, there is no Pacific region that is an 'objective' given, but only a competing set of ideational constructs that project upon a certain location on the globe the imperatives of interest, power, or vision of these historically produced relationships.<sup>276</sup>

In other words, *Painting from the Pacific* related to a limited view of the Pacific, one that aligned with New Zealand's most important relationships in this area at this time.

---

<sup>274</sup> Wystan Curnow, "Painting in the Pacific," *Landfall* 15, no. 3 (September 1961): 259-60. Curnow, an English and History graduate who had recently started writing reviews of exhibitions was a regular visitor to the ACAG and had taken painting classes with Colin McCahon. In 1963 he finished his master of arts and then moved to the United States for his doctoral degree. Robert Leonard, "Curnow's Leverage," in *The Critic's Part: Wystan Curnow Art Writings 1971-2013*, ed. Christina Barton, Robert Leonard and Thomasin Sleigh (Wellington: Adam Art Gallery, Te Pātaka Toi, 2014), 2.

<sup>275</sup> For New Zealand's changing relationship with Japan, see Ann Trotter, "From Suspicion to Growing Partnership: New Zealand and Japan" in *New Zealand in World Affairs*, vol. 2, 1957-1972, ed. Malcolm McKinnon (Wellington: New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, 1991), 195-226.

<sup>276</sup> Arif Dirlik, "The Asia-Pacific Idea: Reality and Representation in the Invention of a Regional Structure," *Journal of World History* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 56.

## The development of the exhibition

The conceptual origins of *Painting from the Pacific* may have had deeper significance, but the ACAG's decision to put the exhibition together was based at least in part on practical considerations, as a response to the decline of the provision of exhibitions from organisations like the USIS. As noted in the previous chapter, Tomory had continued to solicit the USIS for exhibitions following the display of *Eight American Artists*, but a combination of budget cuts and USIA concerns over the efficacy of modern art as a propaganda tool in New Zealand meant that nothing would come of this. It thus became clear to Tomory that the US information programme was no longer a viable source of meaningful art exhibitions. He mentioned this as an issue in an interview with the *New Zealand Herald* in April 1960 in relation to a proposed trip to Europe later that year, noting that

Auckland needs four or five major exhibitions a year and we rely heavily on overseas shows. . . . Unfortunately our present sources are drying up and some of the larger organisations in Britain and America which handle prestige exhibitions are more interested in sending their shows on goodwill tours to non-democratic countries.<sup>277</sup>

As a response to the waning opportunities to receive or solicit exhibitions directly from overseas organisations, Tomory further stated that “the only thing to do is to go out and arrange our own.”<sup>278</sup>

Shortly after this interview, Tomory sent letters to institutions in the United States, Japan and Australia with which he had a relationship in order to put together the exhibition that would become *Painting from the Pacific*. He wrote to George Culler, who had replaced Dr. Morley as director of the SFMA, Hal Missingham, the director of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, and Atsuo Imaizumi, vice-director of the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo.<sup>279</sup> As Tomory explained in his initial correspondence, the intention was to arrange an exhibition with works from Japan, the

---

<sup>277</sup> “Worthwhile Trip Planned,” *NZH*, 2 April 1960.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>279</sup> The AGNSW had supplied some paintings for the exhibition *Contemporary Australian Painting*, displayed at the ACAG in 1957, and Missingham had written the introduction to the catalogue. Tokyo's National Museum of Modern Art had provided the exhibition *Contemporary Japanese Art* to the ACAG in 1959.



US West Coast, the east coast of Australia and New Zealand with the purpose of showing “a clear relationship amongst the regions named above, all of whom lie on the periphery of the Pacific.”<sup>280</sup> To this end, he asked these men if they would be willing to select paintings for the show to both represent their countries and to “contribute towards the aim of the exhibition.”<sup>281</sup> Tomory said that works could be either abstract or representational, “but all must be by contemporary, serious artists,” preferably painted in the last four years, and that “special emphasis should be given to those paintings which evoke and capture the particular characteristics of the Pacific sea-board.”<sup>282</sup> Both Culler and Imaizumi agreed to select works, but Missingham declined the offer due to other commitments.<sup>283</sup> He did, however, suggest two people who might be interested, one of whom was Laurence Thomas, who had recently been the director of the Perth Art Gallery and at the time was working as an art critic,<sup>284</sup> and subsequently would be appointed director of the Queensland Art Gallery. Tomory wrote to him on 29 September 1960, and Thomas replied on 17 October, agreeing to make the Australian selection.<sup>285</sup> In his initial letters Tomory had also expressed a desire to tour the exhibition to the contributing countries, and noted that copies of the letters were being sent to the relevant ambassadors and the Australian high commissioner “with the hope that the Governments concerned may facilitate arrangements and also provide sufficient help so that the exhibition could be toured to each country concerned.”<sup>286</sup> However, an international tour would not eventuate, which unfortunately meant that the opportunity for a wider dialogue was lost.

### The US West Coast selection

The relationship that the ACAG had developed with the SFMA through Dr. Morley and McCahon’s trip, in conjunction with its location, made it the obvious institution

---

<sup>280</sup> Peter Tomory to Atsuo Imaizumi, 10 June 1960; Peter Tomory to Hal Missingham, 16 June 1960; Peter Tomory to George Culler, 16 June 1960. *Painting from the Pacific* Exhibition File, AAG Archives.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

<sup>283</sup> Culler replied to Tomory on 11 August 1960 stating his willingness to select works from the United States. Imaizumi eventually confirmed his involvement in a letter to Tomory dated 14 October 1960. *Painting from the Pacific* Exhibition File, AAG Archives.

<sup>284</sup> Hal Missingham to Peter Tomory, 30 June 1960, *ibid.*

<sup>285</sup> Tomory to Thomas, 29 September 1960; Thomas to Tomory, 17 October 1960. *Ibid.*

<sup>286</sup> Peter Tomory to Atsuo Imaizumi, 10 June 1960; Peter Tomory to Hal Missingham, 16 June 1960; Peter Tomory to George Culler, 16 June 1960.

for Tomory to contact to select the US West Coast component of *Painting from the Pacific*. It was also the only museum on the US West Coast specifically devoted to modern art and it held regular exhibitions of modern artists from that region.

Although Morley had left the SFMA in August 1958, her replacement, George Culler, was willing to offer his assistance. Intriguingly, this may have been prompted, or at least encouraged, by the USIA. This agency had become aware of the exhibition after the USIS in Wellington had forwarded Tomory's letter to the US ambassador in New Zealand to Washington.<sup>287</sup> Although the USIA replied to the USIS that they were unable to offer assistance due to budget constraints, they also stated, "We realize the importance of international exchange in the field of fine arts and we are always glad to assist to the best of our ability in facilitating the interchange of art exhibits."<sup>288</sup> The response also noted that it had communicated with Culler about the proposal.

Although I have not uncovered any record of this correspondence either at the SFMoMA archives or the US National Archives, it is possible that this communication prompted Culler's reply to Tomory. The USIA may well have encouraged Culler to respond in a positive manner in recognition of the value of maintaining cultural contacts despite its own inability to fulfill these.

The SFMA's selection consisted of twenty-six paintings by the same number of artists. These were sourced from its own collection, from private galleries and private collections in San Francisco and Los Angeles, and from the artists themselves. The earliest work dated from 1944, but, in keeping with Tomory's request for recent paintings, the majority were from the period 1955 to 1961. In the catalogue, Culler divided the selection along geographical lines, in accordance with what were recognised as the West Coast's three main art-producing areas: the Northwest, Los Angeles and its environs, and the San Francisco Bay Area. There was a greater emphasis on the two California regions with ten artists chosen for the Los Angeles region and thirteen for San Francisco, and only three painters from the Northwest. This was likely a result of Californian bias and the potential inaccessibility of artworks.

---

<sup>287</sup> USIS, Wellington to USIA, "Proposed Exhibition of Pacific Paintings," 20 July 1960, New Zealand [Folder 1/2], 1959-1966 Records Concerning Exhibits in Foreign Countries, RG306, NACP. Given Tomory's lack of success over the previous year in obtaining concrete support from the USIA, this was possibly a scenario that he had hoped to bypass.

<sup>288</sup> USIA to USIS Wellington, 25 August 1960, *ibid*.

It is worthwhile examining this selection in some detail to provide an idea of the types of works that were on display to the New Zealand audience. This is, however, hampered by the difficulty in sourcing images for the majority of the works. Only a small number are illustrated in the catalogue, and most are not available in publications or online. The three artists from the Northwest would have at least been familiar to New Zealanders who had seen *Eight American Artists*, as they had also been included in that exhibition. Morris Graves's *Bird Maddened by the Sound of Machinery in the Air*, 1944, which featured his common bird motif, and Mark Tobey's *Written Over the Plains*, 1950, an example of his "white writing" technique, each exemplified the type of work most often associated with these artists.<sup>289</sup> The work by the third artist in the group, Kenneth Callahan's *Prometheus No. 2* (no date) is an expressive, figurative work that draws on Western mythology for its subject-matter.

The southern California selection firstly contained recent work by some older artists, such as Stanton MacDonald-Wright (1890-1973) who was one of the earliest American abstractionists, co-founding a movement called Synchronism that had its basis in colour theory and had associations with music.<sup>290</sup> Although I do not have an image of his work from show, *Solution*, 1955, it is likely that it reflected a return to his Synchronist ideas, as in the mid-1950s he began to revisit this mode. There were also works by four artists associated with a movement called Abstract Classicism: Lorser Feitelson, Karl Benjamin, Frederick Hammersley and Helen Lundeberg. This style had its origins in early twentieth-century European geometric abstraction, and its practitioners positioned it as an alternative to New York Abstract Expressionism.<sup>291</sup> Each artist had his or her own distinctive style, but together they "shared a penchant for minimal, geometric abstraction marked by the use of clean lines, bold colors, and flat, interrelated forms."<sup>292</sup> Lundeberg and Benjamin were both represented in *Painting from the Pacific* by works in this style, and it is likely that Feitelson and

---

<sup>289</sup> Both works were from the SFMA collection, chosen no doubt in part for convenience.

<sup>290</sup> Peter Plagens, *Sunshine Muse: Art on the West Coast, 1975-1970* (1974; repr., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 16.

<sup>291</sup> For the development of the Abstract Classicist movement, see Andrew Perchuk and Catherine Taft, "FLOATING STRUCTURES: Building the Modern in Postwar Los Angeles," in *Pacific Standard Time: Los Angeles Art 1945-1980*, ed. Rebecca Peabody et al. (London: Tate Publishing, 2011), 34-36.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

Hammersley were as well. In contrast to the other Abstract Classicists, Lundeberg would sometimes incorporate more obviously representational elements in her work, and her painting in the show, entitled *Desert Road (Landscape)*, 1960 (figure 11), is indicative of this.<sup>293</sup> Although the interrelationships of the formal elements are of central importance, the work is also evocative of the Californian landscape, with a feeling of space created by the high horizon line and the use of orthogonals to suggest a road leading back into the vast distance. In contrast, Karl Benjamin's *I.F. Black, Grey, Umber, Red*, 1958, has no such landscape suggestion; part of his Interlocking Forms series, this work features a series of distinct but irregular vertical shapes across the width of the canvas, creating a sense of rhythm and movement.

At this time, Abstract Classicism was the most recognizable Los Angeles style, but the SFMA also selected paintings by artists from that area who were working in other modes, specifically Lee Mullican, John Paul Jones, Richards Ruben, Craig Kauffman, Edward Moses and Billy Al Bengston. This highlighted the growing diversity of artistic practice in the region. I have not been able to source images of the paintings chosen for these artists, which makes assessment difficult, but it is notable that Ruben, Kauffman, Moses and Bengston were all players in the emerging avant-garde scene in Los Angeles. This was centred around the seminal Ferus Gallery, opened in 1957 by curator Walter Hopps and artist Ed Kienholz, and where each of these artists exhibited.<sup>294</sup> Ruben was a key exponent of a specific Los Angeles strand of Abstract Expressionism, developed in part as a response to displays of San Francisco Bay Area Abstract Expressionist artists at Ferus and Hopps's earlier venture, Syndell Studios.<sup>295</sup> Ruben's painting in the show, *Claremont No. 43*, 1960, was part of a wider series of strongly gestural works that contain large patches of colour with visible brushstrokes. It was also the largest work in the show, at 205.7 x 203.2cm. According to Culler's catalogue introduction, Kauffman's *Prune Face*, 1959, was also Abstract Expressionist in style, although I have gleaned little information beyond this general descriptor. It is likely, however, that he painted this work in San Francisco as it was sourced from the Dilexi Gallery, an avant-garde space in that city run by a friend of

---

<sup>293</sup> This was simply listed as *Landscape* in the exhibition catalogue. Confirmation of the correct title comes from Dave Hickey, *Helen Lundeberg and the Illusory Landscape: Five Decades of Painting* (Los Angeles: Feitelson Arts Foundation, 2004), 46.

<sup>294</sup> See Lucy Bradnock and Rani Singh, "PAPA'S GOT A BRAND NEW BAG: Crafting an Art Scene," in Peabody et. al., *Pacific Standard Time*, 95-108.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, 96 and 100.

Walter Hopps, that exhibited Kauffman's work during a period when he worked there.<sup>296</sup> Edward Moses's work, *Squeezy and Tulip*, 1960, was sourced from Dilexi Gallery too, so was probably also made in San Francisco, where Moses had moved following some time in New York. If so, as it was a mixed media piece, it was most likely part of the general development of his oeuvre at this time towards the refiguration of paintings as objects.<sup>297</sup> This is backed up by Culler's description in the catalogue of Moses, along with Bengston, as representative of artists who "have explored neo-surrealist ideas in painting and construction."<sup>298</sup>

The San Francisco Bay area selection included the largest number of artists, the most notable of whom was Richard Diebenkorn. He was represented by the work *Berkeley No. 23*, 1955 (figure 12), from the SFMA collection, which was reproduced in the catalogue. It was part of his Berkeley series painted between 1953 and 1956 following his return to San Francisco after time in Albuquerque, New Mexico and Urbana, Illinois. This series was in many ways a culmination of a specific phase in Diebenkorn's artistic life as in 1955 he had started returning to representational and figurative art.<sup>299</sup> In *Berkeley No. 23*, Diebenkorn has flattened the picture plane through the division of the work into clearly delineated, solid patches of colour, and also emphasised surface quality through expressive brushwork. However, although abstract, the series as a whole does have a strong sense of place. As Peter Plagens notes, "Anyone who has visited the Berkeley hills and looked westward at the sloping patchwork of city blocks and boulevards leading to San Francisco Bay will recognize their analogue in Diebenkorn's *Berkeley* paintings."<sup>300</sup>

Diebenkorn had been an important early exponent of Bay Area Abstract Expressionism, and the selection of works also included artists identified with both the first and second generations of this trend. In the former category were Hassel Smith and James Budd Dixon, and in the latter Leslie Kerr, Julius Wasserstein and

---

<sup>296</sup> For the relationship between Ferus and Dilexi, see Hunter Drohojowska-Philp, *Rebels in Paradise: The Los Angeles Art Scene and the 1960s* (New York: A John Macrae Book/Henry Holt and Company, 2011), 34.

<sup>297</sup> See Bradnock and Singh, "PAPA'S GOT A BRAND NEW BAG," 103.

<sup>298</sup> George D. Culler, "America Introduction," in Auckland City Art Gallery, *Painting from the Pacific*, [23].

<sup>299</sup> See Jane Livingston, "The Art of Richard Diebenkorn," in *The Art of Richard Diebenkorn*, ed. Livingston (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 46.

<sup>300</sup> Plagens, *Sunshine Muse*, 151.

Noriko Yamamoto (a relatively recent arrival from Japan). All these works were relatively large, and although I have not been able to locate images for the second group, both Smith's and Dixon's works were illustrated in the catalogue. Their paintings are gestural, conveying energy and movement through their brushwork. Smith's *Untitled*, 1960 (figure 13), measuring 179.7 x 175.3cm, is dominated by a field of brown overlaying an orange background. There is a central focus on a belt of orange and red that creates a sense of depth, while black lines and marks scattered across the picture plane add to the impression of movement. Dixon's *White with Red Violet*, a smaller painting at 148.6 x 127cm, is even more dynamic with its "maelstroms of paint, heaving and swelling, curling and unfurling."<sup>301</sup> It comes from a period when he applied paint on the canvas thickly and utilised strong colours.<sup>302</sup>

At this time, several artists had moved back to figurative painting, and this trend was represented through the inclusion of works by Elmer Bischoff, James Weeks and Nathan Oliveira. Although the Bischoff work in the show is listed as *Figure at a Table*, 1958, judging from an installation shot of the work, it is likely that it is the painting *Orange Sweater*, 1955 (figure 14), now in the collection of SFMoMA. This is a calm, contemplative painting depicting an interior with two seated figures, lit by a large window. The composition is balanced and the colours are primarily subdued greys, greens and blues. However, the viewer's attention is drawn to the main figure through the splash of orange used to denote her sweater. In the painting by James Weeks, *Two Children*, 1958, the two frontal, static figures dominate the composition, with limited detail in the faces. This painting fits in with Caroline Jones's characterisation of his work at this time as exhibiting "a monumentalizing formal simplicity."<sup>303</sup> Although I have not located an image of the Oliveira painting in the show (*Untitled*, no date given), it is likely that this represented another approach in the return to figuration. His work tended to be more expressionistic, often focusing on an isolated figure in a non-specific landscape.<sup>304</sup> Finally, there were also paintings

---

<sup>301</sup> Susan Landauer, *The San Francisco School of Abstract Expressionism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 115. This painting is called *White and Red Violet* in the exhibition catalogue.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, 115-16.

<sup>303</sup> Caroline A. Jones, *Bay Area Figurative Art 1950-1965* (San Francisco: University of California Press, 1990), 68.

<sup>304</sup> As Caroline Jones writes, "Oliveira's work, more than that of other Bay Area Figurative painters, belonged to a classical strain of agonized expressionism that seemed to reflect an existentialist view of man – battered, tragic, but enduring." *Ibid.*, 77.

by four artists who had been included in exhibitions at the SFMA in 1959, Richard Bowman, Art Holman, David Simpson and Gordon Onslow-Ford. These artists were very diverse, but Culler related that they all seemed “to share a concern to develop, each for themselves, an intensely personal way of translating their experiences with the natural world into a visual order.”<sup>305</sup> Gordon Onslow-Ford’s *Live Rock*, 1960 (figure 15), a tall work measuring 198.8 x 76.2cm, shows the influence of calligraphy in the artist’s use of lines, circles and dots as key elements in the composition. These forms are distributed over the whole canvas in a controlled manner, yet the painting communicates the impression of energy and dynamism. Richard Bowman had similar concerns in his art, but was motivated by an interest in atomic physics and his means of expression was very different. His work in *Painting from the Pacific, Kinetogenic No. 15*, 1958, was part of a wider series that strikingly utilises fluorescent paint.<sup>306</sup>

It is clear from this brief discussion of the West Coast selection that the SFMA did not choose works with the wider premise of the exhibition (to highlight commonalities in the art of the Pacific region) directly in mind but that its primary intention was instead to showcase some of the movements and trends that had developed in that region in recent times, particularly in California. This is further backed up by Culler’s catalogue introduction, which only addressed the concept of regionalism in general terms rather than in relation to the Pacific specifically. In this, Culler argued that, although “it is popular to assert today that the new forms in painting have become universal,” the reality was that “for those who care to see, important regional and individual differences exist within the shared idioms.”<sup>307</sup> He then contrasted European and American painting, and West Coast painting with that coming out of New York, writing,

To me West Coast painting seems less self-conscious. The artists are less concerned about themselves and each other, about critics and reputations, and therefore somewhat more free to follow the suggestions of nature and experience, wherever these may lead. The West too has been more exposed to Oriental thought, and although often this influence has been superficial, it has in some instances led to important results.<sup>308</sup>

---

<sup>305</sup> Culler, “America Introduction,” [24].

<sup>306</sup> Richard Bowman, “Paintings with Fluorescent Pigments of the Microcosm and Macrocosm,” *Leonardo* 6, no. 4 (August 1973): 289-92.

<sup>307</sup> Culler, “America Introduction,” [23].

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*

Culler's main intention was thus to present the idea that West Coast art had unique characteristics that separated it from New York art especially. And although the last sentence suggests artistic links across the Pacific, this was based on intellectual exchange rather than the idea of a shared Pacific experience.

Culler's introduction also represented the main source of contextual information to assist viewers in gaining some understanding of the West Coast selection, especially as the majority of the works would have been unfamiliar to a New Zealand audience. He wrote briefly about the three areas incorporated within the selection, providing some details about the artists and the stylistic features of their work, as well as some historical context regarding the development of new trends in West Coast art. The extent to which New Zealanders would have engaged with or understood this is hard to judge, but it did at least offer some idea about what was happening on the West Coast, particularly California, and differentiated it from what was taking place in New York. One point worth noting is that Culler did not take into account the amount of artistic interchange that had occurred in the area, particularly between San Francisco and Los Angeles from the mid-1950s, not least in relation to the various artists who had lived in both cities. For example, as discussed, both Craig Kauffman and Edward Moses were included in the Los Angeles discussion, but both had lived in San Francisco and their works in the show were probably painted there, thus to some extent undermining Culler's divisions and emphasising the difficulty in assigning regional characteristics to art. Of course, the West Coast selection did not operate in isolation, since it was part of a larger exhibition that not only included works from other countries but also had, at least in Tomory's eyes, an overriding conception.

#### The presentation of *Painting from the Pacific* in New Zealand

Although there are only installation shots of *Painting from the Pacific* from the ACAG (figures 16-20), it appears that the display of the exhibition in each venue was different. This was in part because no one from the ACAG travelled with the show, so responsibility for the hang lay with each individual gallery director. In Auckland the works were mixed together, but a report from the *Otago Daily Times* recounts that at the DPAG they were divided by country, with two rooms devoted to the paintings



from Japan and one room to the American works, while the New Zealand and Australian sections shared a room.<sup>309</sup> There is no evidence of how the works were displayed at either the RMAG or at the NAG, though at the latter around a dozen of the larger pictures were not hung at all because they did not have enough staff to handle them.<sup>310</sup>

In looking at the display of the exhibition at the ACAG, it is clear that this was very much dictated by Tomory's premise, even though there were other factors in play. The purpose of the exhibition was outlined in an introductory wall panel that was placed next to the stairs on the mezzanine floor (figure 17).<sup>311</sup> This was primarily a reiteration of Tomory's hypothesis of a common Pacific style as he had described it in his catalogue introduction, with the addition of a line at the end reading, "The theme of this exhibition is therefore experimental rather than definitive." As noted, the works from the different countries were mixed together, and according to a report in the *Auckland Star*, this was "in order to dispel any idea of 'competition' between the countries involved."<sup>312</sup> In this regard, the hang was true to the concept of the show, allowing the viewer to make associations without preconceptions. Here, the catalogue texts (if the catalogue was purchased) represented the only guides to each country's selection. It is also unclear whether labels were provided for the works, which might have identified the country of origin: none are visible in the installation shots. From this point of view, then, we may consider the viewer as an active participant in making meanings out of the exhibition, although this was conditioned by the underlying premise and the introductory text.

In contrast, the display in Dunedin may have generated a different response. The division of the exhibition by country would have made it easier for viewers to gain a sense of the specific art of each of these and make comparisons between regions on that basis. At the same time, restrictions of time and space were also important factors. In Auckland, the works were hung close together, some above each other, and

---

<sup>309</sup> Thomas Esplin, "Aesthetic Feast of Colour, Shape," *ODT*, 12 September 1961. Esplin was an artist and lecturer in design at the University of Otago who was born in Scotland in 1915 and emigrated to New Zealand in 1954.

<sup>310</sup> Eric Ramsden, "Abstractionists' Field Day: 'Shocker' is Word for Art Show," *EP*, 17 November 1961.

<sup>311</sup> There is no evidence of whether this text was placed in any of the other galleries.

<sup>312</sup> "Pacific Art," *AS*, 9 June 1961.

not at a uniform height. As Hamish Keith relates in his autobiography, after works for shows were unpacked they were put “straight on the walls, often at breakneck speed.”<sup>313</sup> He further states that “Colin [McCahon] had a wonderful eye for a hang and an instinctive genius for the rhythm of spaces between works. We learnt from him those tiny but critical differences between the right height and the right gap and the wrong.”<sup>314</sup> Hence, I would suggest that aesthetic concerns were an important consideration in the placement of artworks, in conjunction with practical concerns of size, rather than the creation of specific juxtapositions, even if the effect of a mixed hang was also appropriate for the hypothesis behind the show.

### Responses to the exhibition

The exhibition was well-received by the public in Auckland. It attracted an attendance of around 8,000,<sup>315</sup> and inspired a great deal of interest. In the *New Zealand Herald* Tomory was quoted as saying, “To our surprise these paintings – mostly abstracts – seem to have caught on with viewers.... And they are popular not only with youngsters but with elderly people. All have found them stimulating.”<sup>316</sup> In Christchurch, the exhibition was well-supported by the director of the RMAG, William Baverstock, who publicised it both in the press and on radio, and arranged for Professor John Simpson from the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts to give a talk.<sup>317</sup> The total attendance reported was 1,590 over four weeks, which was a reasonable number for the RMAG, and Baverstock noted that it “was both interesting and puzzling to most visitors.”<sup>318</sup> The exhibition did not, however, fare as well in Dunedin.<sup>319</sup> As Annette Pearse, director of the DPAG, noted in a letter to Tomory, “We’ve had as much publicity as we could have had in the papers, but didn’t get the

---

<sup>313</sup> Hamish Keith, *Native Wit* (Auckland: Random House, 2008), 138.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>315</sup> “Touring Exhibitions,” undated document, HS 04/56, Information Files, AAG Archives.

<sup>316</sup> “Art Gallery Popular in Lunch Hour,” *NZH*, 16 June 1961.

<sup>317</sup> “The Chairman’s Report to the Art Gallery Committee,” Minutes of a meeting of the Art Gallery Committee, 1 August 1961, Art Gallery Committee No. 11, 12 October 1960 to 7 September 1965, Christchurch City Council Minute Books of Council Meetings – Councils and Committees, Christchurch City Council Archives.

<sup>318</sup> “The Chairman’s Report to the Art Gallery Committee,” Minutes of a Meeting of the Art Gallery Committee, 5 September 1961, *ibid.*

<sup>319</sup> “Exhibition of Art Poorly Supported,” *ODT*, 20 September 1961.

attendance we would have liked unfortunately, as it was an interesting exhibition mostly.”<sup>320</sup>

With regard to the critical response, reviews of the show appeared in newspapers in each city where the exhibition was displayed. In addition Wystan Curnow wrote a review in *Landfall* and Peter Tomory wrote an article for *Home and Building*. The most negative review came from the conservative Eric Ramsden in Wellington’s *Evening Post*. He described the show as “in the main, an artistic shocker,” and even asked “why on earth has the National Gallery given it house room?”<sup>321</sup> The Japanese selection was the only one to escape his ire, and he attacked the other sections for their lack of balance and because they were not representative, stating that “extremists” dominated at the expense of examples of naturalistic and representational art. Referring to the American paintings he wrote, “Some of these works suggest that they could have come from a psychiatric ward,”<sup>322</sup> and he also criticised the fact that only artists from the West Coast had been chosen, thus demonstrating that he had clearly not understood the purpose of the show.

Although other responses were also critical of elements of the exhibition, they were more balanced and engaged on some level with the underlying conception. Notably, both Tomory and Curnow took as their dominant theme the question of whether or not the exhibition fulfilled the premise as outlined in the catalogue. Most significantly Tomory acknowledged in his article that the show was not a success based on this, writing, “This was an ambitious attempt, resulting in an exciting show, but one would be brave indeed to state that its aim was realised in any positive manner.”<sup>323</sup> He did, however, argue that “there was one thing which seemed to have a regional quality and that was the brushwork,”<sup>324</sup> an idea I will return to. Likewise, Curnow also found the show wanting based on the terms laid out by Tomory in his catalogue foreword, observing

---

<sup>320</sup> Pearse to Tomory, 4 October 1961, *Painting from the Pacific*, Exhibition Files, AAG Archives.

<sup>321</sup> Ramsden, “Abstractionists’ Field Day.” He added “perhaps it is as well to let the public see just how silly some modern painters can be.” Ibid.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid.

<sup>323</sup> Peter Tomory, “Painting in the Pacific,” *Home and Building*, 1 July 1961, 56.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid.

If the physical characteristics are significantly dissimilar and if, as I believe, the cultural characteristics considerably disparate rather than common we are forced back upon these ‘indefinable elements’ which, as Mr Tomory ought to know, conceal a multitude of dialectic sins.<sup>325</sup>

Even so, both Tomory and Curnow recognised the exhibition’s wider value. Thus Tomory concluded his article by stating,

This is a lively exhibition comparable to a similar European one in terms of its capacity to stimulate both the eye and mind and it concentrates in one exhibition the painting of the main Pacific countries. It is not important that it proves or disproves its point or that the European influence is still much in evidence for it is far more gratifying to know that this area of the world can produce a show of this high quality.<sup>326</sup>

Curnow, too, highlighted the positive aspects of the show, arguing that “if this exhibition will not sustain the arguments of the Pacific basin myth-makers it gives the New Zealander the rare opportunity of seeing a collection which includes some very exciting contemporary paintings in the pigment.”<sup>327</sup>

With regard to other newspaper reviews, Beverley Simmons, writing in the *New Zealand Herald*, described the show as “by turns rousing or dismaying but never dull,”<sup>328</sup> and, while Thomas Esplin wrote in the *Otago Daily Times* that “the diehard conservative in art” would find little of interest to them, he continued,

But if you belong to that select band of thinking individuals possessed of an open mind and having some previous experience in the enjoyment of contemporary art, then your visit to this exhibition will provide you with an aesthetic feast of colour and shape; a feast not a bit unusual for the galleries of Europe but certainly rare for Dunedin.<sup>329</sup>

Similarly, Nelson Kenny in the *Press* concluded that “no-one with an interest in painting should miss it, because it is the best exhibition of modern painting to be shown here, and because it is going to have a big effect on the development of

---

<sup>325</sup> Curnow, “Painting in the Pacific,” 260.

<sup>326</sup> Tomory, “Painting in the Pacific,” 59.

<sup>327</sup> Curnow, “Painting in the Pacific,” 262.

<sup>328</sup> B. B. [Beverley Simmons], “Expressionist Trend in Art Show,” *NZH*, 29 May 1961. Simmons was an art critic and writer for the *New Zealand Herald* from 1957 to 1965, and the *Sunday Herald* from 1965 to 1973.

<sup>329</sup> Esplin, “Aesthetic Feast of Colour, Shape.”

painting in New Zealand.”<sup>330</sup> Each believed that the works on display demonstrated similarities in style, but that national distinctions were also evident. However, they drew different conclusions. To Simmons, that “the definition between each country is very clearly marked, in spite of the fairly judicious mixture in the hanging” effectively negated the premise,<sup>331</sup> whereas for Esplin the similarity between the sections was the result of in their adherence to developments coming out of Europe. As he wrote,

It is tempting to try to seek in this exhibition an artistic language common in all Pacific areas, but if one exists it is surely only a dialect of language, already spoken clearly in the artistic centres of Europe, for the outstanding feature of this exhibition is the extent to which the Pacific area has been Westernised.<sup>332</sup>

Kenny was the only reviewer to endorse Tomory’s originating premise. His argument was that, although most of the works were “in the so-called abstract expressionist style which is international,” they were connected by “the character of the expression, which is significantly different from European art.”<sup>333</sup>

In response to the West Coast selection specifically, both Simmons and Esplin argued that these paintings were primarily derivative of European art, suggesting a lack of knowledge about the developments that had occurred in American painting over the past two decades.<sup>334</sup> In contrast, Curnow and Kenny showed a greater understanding of the American works and engaged more fully with them. The former discussed each region’s selection in his article, and in doing so devoted the most space to the West Coast. Although he was not entirely complimentary, he did argue that this section contained “some of the finest works in the entire exhibition,” singling

---

<sup>330</sup> Nelson Kenny, “Pacific Paintings Show Common Characteristic,” *Press*, 5 August 1961. Kenny was an artist and the art critic for the *Press* who championed contemporary art. See Feeney, *The Radical, the Reactionary and the Canterbury Society of Arts*, 99.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>332</sup> As Esplin further stated: “Abstraction, non objectivity, tachism, action painting, indeed subjective art have become the accepted artistic expression of this century.” Esplin, “Aesthetic Feast of Colour, Shape.”

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>334</sup> Simmons wrote, “American painting still has a strong European flavour.” Simmons, “Expressionist Trend in Art Show.” And Esplin observed, “The strength of the Oriental influence on the work of the American painters is an interesting conclusion that can be drawn from the work of Mark Tobey and Morris Graves, but the echoes of Paris are strong in the American room.” Esplin, “Aesthetic Feast of Colour, Shape.”

out “painters who have turned existing styles to their own rather special purposes.”<sup>335</sup> In particular, Curnow praised the works by Lundeberg, Diebenkorn, Bischoff and Bengston, for example describing Bischoff’s painting as “a beautiful evocation of light and space, [that] successfully draws the spectator *into* the picture.”<sup>336</sup> In the *Press*, Kenny wrote positively about Morris Graves and Mark Tobey, and the works from the San Francisco region. He gave special praise to the works by Bowman, Onslow-Ford and Bischoff, but was critical of the works from Los Angeles, which he described as “a distinctly less interesting group, lacking the vitality of their San Francisco counterparts and inclining towards tasteful decoration.”<sup>337</sup>

### Assessing the impact of *Painting from the Pacific*

This exhibition provided the art-going public in New Zealand with the opportunity to see a range of recent, modern painting from four different countries. From an institutional point of view, it marked the first time that an exhibition with a specific thesis had been put together in New Zealand. Significantly, it was the first exhibition that presented New Zealand art directly in relation to art from overseas, and several critics argued here, not unjustly, that the New Zealand works, which included paintings by Colin McCahon, Milan Mrkusich, Don Peebles and Toss Woollaston, held their own amidst international company. For example, Beverley Simmons wrote, “The point that impresses most in the New Zealand display is the way in which these artists make comparable company with other Pacific painters,”<sup>338</sup> a view also shared by Tomory, who stated in his article for *Home and Building* that “it was interesting to see how well the New Zealand paintings compared with the others.”<sup>339</sup> More specifically, in the context of this thesis, *Painting from the Pacific* was the first opportunity for New Zealanders to see original examples of modern American painting, ranging from gestural and geometric abstractions to figurative work, since *Eight American Artists* three years prior.

---

<sup>335</sup> Curnow, “Painting from the Pacific,” 261. In his general description of the West Coast selection, Curnow wrote, “Most of the major contemporary ‘movements’ have their representatives in the selection: ineffectual Surrealists; pleasant Synchromatists; industrious pattern makers; tired (but still angry) abstract Expressionists; and well oriented calligraphers (Tobey and Hassell [*sic*] Smith).” Ibid.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid.

<sup>337</sup> Kenny, “Pacific Paintings Show Common Characteristics.”

<sup>338</sup> Simmons, “Expressionist Trend in Art Show.”

<sup>339</sup> Tomory, “Painting in the Pacific,” 59.

The works may not have been particularly well understood given that they had been removed from their specific context of making with only limited information on this provided, but for artists in particular, this first-hand experience was of value at a time when reproductions in magazines and books were the most common form of exposure to overseas art. The surface characteristics and vibrant colours of some of the American paintings would have been of great interest given that these were elements lost in reproduction. Likewise, the show presented an opportunity to see some of the new types of media then being employed in the United States. For example, Richard Bowman's *Kinetogenic No. 15* was painted with fluorescent oils; Gordon Onslow-Ford's *Live Rock* used Parle's paint, a forerunner of acrylic, and Noriko Yamamoto's *Kakizomi*, 1960, utilised vinyl. Similarly, the large scale of some of the works was another factor of note, although this was not exclusive to the American section, and the largest of the paintings were not on display at the NAG.

More broadly, the idea also developed that, although the exhibition may have been deemed a failure in terms of its premise, some kind of affinity did exist between New Zealand and American painting. This was first expressed by Tomory in his *Home and Building* article as part of his idea that if there was one aspect of the show that demonstrated a regional similarity it was the brushwork. In making this point, Tomory first referred to his recent experience of seeing paintings by New York artists such as Philip Guston, Robert Motherwell, Mark Rothko and Jackson Pollock at an exhibition in Düsseldorf during a trip to Europe from November 1960 to March 1961. In relation to this, he recorded that he was "suddenly...aware of feeling quite at home" and that this was related to "the putting on of the paint. It had a kind of honest blunt inelegance about it."<sup>340</sup> Tomory recognised that "it could be argued, of course, that much European painting exhibits similar manipulation of the brush," but felt that this was "not quite the same for there it is more tied to the expressionist attitude, whereas in the Pacific it is more universal."<sup>341</sup> That is, in Europe, a freer brushwork was characteristic of a specific style of painting, but in the Pacific region it was generally applied across styles. Tomory did, however, concede that "this claim for a brush stroke is skating on thin ice and such a suggestion can be only tentative and

---

<sup>340</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid.

probably more evident in the American, Australian and New Zealand sections [of *Painting from the Pacific*].”<sup>342</sup>

Tomory’s initial reference to US East Coast painting as part of this assessment is problematic when he is discussing the Pacific, but he would later expand on his ideas in an article that he wrote for the *New Zealand Listener* magazine in 1964, entitled “What’s Different About New Zealand Art?” In this he restated his belief in regional variations in art, and discussed this in terms of surface and technique, making reference to both Australian and American painting. Now, however, he also brought in the question of cultural experience and its influence. As he wrote,

Many of our customs here are not European, although we may say they are. They are coloured by a colonial background. Anything sophisticated we tend to regard as effete. I think that in the ex-colonial countries there is a conscious rejection, in all forms of life, of the mother country’s habits. I suppose it is a move towards a kind of national identity. In painting, this comes out as a revolt against sophisticated arrangements of brush-strokes. You can almost use the word ‘brutal’. There is a ‘brutal’ application of paint. New Zealand painting in this way is closer to the American than any European kind, although we have some artists who are more sophisticated than others.<sup>343</sup>

As Pound has noted, Tomory probably borrowed this rhetoric “from that commonly used in the 1950s by the Americans to promote their Abstract Expressionism as an art essentially different from Europe’s,” in particular citing Clement Greenberg’s essay ‘Is the French Avant-Garde Overrated?’ as a potential source.<sup>344</sup> As Courtney Johnston observes, however, Pound’s discussion was related to his idea that “New Zealand nationalists were continuing to import foreign thinking to define a ‘national’ movement.”<sup>345</sup> She instead argued:

in Tomory’s case it could be said that he was tapping into an international discourse in order to analyse contemporary painting in New Zealand, and in this way explain what differentiated it from – but also how it might be linked to – painting internationally. Tomory’s discourse of regionalism on an

---

<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

<sup>343</sup> Tomory, “What’s Different About New Zealand Art?,” *New Zealand Listener*, 30 October 1964, 3.

<sup>344</sup> Francis Pound, “McCahon, Mondrian and Masking Tape: A Reading of the Centre from the Outermost Edge,” *Journal of New Zealand Art History* 23 (2002): 14-15.

<sup>345</sup> Johnston, “Peter Tomory,” 140.



international level allowed New Zealand art to both remain distinct and simultaneously be seen as part of a wider context.<sup>346</sup>

I would contend that this belief in an affinity between New Zealand and American painting was part of a broader reconfiguration of New Zealand's understanding of its place in the world, and its shift, both culturally and politically, away from Britain and Europe towards the United States. In terms of art, both *Painting from the Pacific* and McCahon's trip helped to foster the growing interest in American art in New Zealand and amongst New Zealand artists. For the ACAG, it marked its continuing efforts to bring in exhibitions containing American art, as demonstrated by two further shows.

#### *International Prints and Drawings from West Coast USA*

*International Prints* was an exhibition of 134 prints by artists from seven countries. There were thirteen British artists, seven French, fourteen German, three Indian, fifteen Italian, eleven Japanese and nine American, the latter represented by eighteen prints. An initiative of the ACAG, the exhibition was displayed first in Auckland in September 1961 and then toured extensively around the country. The works in the show encompassed a range of different print techniques and media, and all were from the twentieth century. According to Tomory's catalogue text, the exhibition was intended in part to present "in a global context, a review of contemporary art."<sup>347</sup> Tomory had begun the process of organising this show in May 1961, writing to various contacts overseas even before *Painting from the Pacific* had opened in Auckland. For the American section, Tomory had initially approached the Cincinnati Art Museum, which provided Tomory with the contact details of the artists he was interested in exhibiting.<sup>348</sup> Tomory then wrote directly to artists to request artworks, with the following replying in the affirmative: Leonard Baskin, Ralston Crawford, Boris Margo, Seong Moy, Gabor Peterdi, Michael Ponce de Leon, Andre Racz and Louis Schanker.

---

<sup>346</sup> Ibid.

<sup>347</sup> Peter Tomory, introduction to *International Prints*, by Auckland City Art Gallery [Auckland: Auckland City Art Gallery, 1961], [2].

<sup>348</sup> This correspondence is contained in *International Prints* Exhibition File, AAG Archives.

*Drawings from West Coast USA* consisted of thirty-five drawings by thirteen artists, and was displayed in Auckland in October 1962, after which it went to New Plymouth, Christchurch, Gisborne and Hamilton. This was not a major exhibition, but it is important as a further example of the ACAG's proactive programme and its interest in US West Coast art at this time. To bring this exhibition together, Tomory first wrote to George Culler at the SFMA requesting his assistance in arranging an exhibition of sixty drawings, and possibly watercolours, by contemporary American artists, which he specified "could be restricted to the West Coast."<sup>349</sup> Tomory only asked Culler for the names and addresses of artists, as he again undertook the actual organisation himself. Culler duly complied with a list of seventy-five West Coast artists who had exhibited in drawing shows at the SFMA.<sup>350</sup> Of interest is that the ACAG sought a second opinion, McCahon writing to Karl Kasten (whom he had met during his US trip and whose painting *Fragment of Autumn* he had presented to the ACAG).<sup>351</sup> This again emphasises the value of the contacts that both Tomory and McCahon had built up. Kasten was happy to offer his judgement on Culler's list, replying promptly with his recommendations on whom he thought were the best artists, and adding six more who he believed were worthy of consideration.<sup>352</sup> Based on these recommendations, Tomory wrote directly to artists, although some declined to be involved.<sup>353</sup> The final list for the exhibition was Louis Bunce, William Dole, Nancy Genn, John Haley, Karl Kasten, Erle Loran, George Miyasaki, Nathan Oliveira, Sonya Rapaport, Deborah Remington, Felix Ruvolo, Howard Warshaw and William Wiley. Only Bunce (who lived in Portland, Oregon) was not based in California.

*International Prints and Drawings from West Coast USA* further familiarised New Zealand audiences with modern American art. In addition, the ACAG purchased works from these shows. The majority of works in *International Prints* were for sale, and Tomory took the opportunity to acquire prints from the French, German, Italian and Japanese sections, and three American artworks: Gabor Peterdi's *Burning Rocks*, Michael Ponce De Leon's *Vernal Equinox* and Louis Schanker's *Circle Image 6* (no

---

<sup>349</sup> Tomory to Culler, 23 March 1962, *Drawings from West Coast USA* Exhibition File, AAG Archives.

<sup>350</sup> Culler to Tomory, 19 April 1962, *ibid.*

<sup>351</sup> Colin McCahon to Karl Kasten, 24 April 1962, *ibid.*

<sup>352</sup> Kasten to McCahon, 28 April 1962, *ibid.*

<sup>353</sup> This correspondence is contained in *Drawings from West Coast USA* Exhibition File, AAG Archives.

dates available). These were the first additions to the ACAG's meagre collection of American art since McCahon had gifted Kasten's *Fragment of Autumn*. Subsequently, the ACAG also acquired six works displayed in *Drawings from West Coast USA*: George Miyasaki's *October Landscape*, 1961 (figure 21), Felix Ruvolo's *Drawing I*, 1962, Howard Warshaw's *Man Turning into Bear*, 1962, Karl Kasten's *Elan*, 1962, Nancy Genn's *Montalvo II*, 1962, and Deborah Remington's *Duel*, 1962. Tomory used these purchases to signal a change in the ACAG's acquisitions policy; an editorial introduction in the ACAG's *Quarterly* publication recorded that "the inclusion of West Coast American artists indicates our hope of building up a collection of contemporary Pacific art."<sup>354</sup> This was an important shift, representing, like *Painting from the Pacific*, an acknowledgement of New Zealand's changing place in the world, although, once again, the definition and conception of the Pacific was limited to the US West Coast, Australia and Japan. However, the reality was that this policy change remained only notional, as there were no further purchases of works from any of these regions while Tomory was director.

New Zealand agency in soliciting art-related interactions with the United States had continued to develop through the early 1960s. The ACAG had been at the forefront of this, particularly through Peter Tomory and Colin McCahon. Although these men would soon leave the ACAG, in 1964 and 1965 respectively to take up positions at the University of Auckland's Elam School of Fine Arts, Tomory would continue to play a significant role in interactions through his position as the exhibitions officer for the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council. The period examined in this chapter was also particularly notable for the emphasis that was placed on US West Coast art. However, as the 1960s progressed New Zealand artists were also increasingly exposed to work from the US East Coast and especially New York.

---

<sup>354</sup> "Editorial," *Auckland City Art Gallery Quarterly* 26, 1963, 2.

### **Chapter Three: The Continuing Growth of Interactions, 1964-1968**

Art-related interactions and encounters between New Zealand and the United States continued to increase through the 1960s, with more individuals travelling between the two countries and more exhibitions of American art displayed in New Zealand. There were several factors behind this. First, there was an increasing desire in New Zealand to experience modern American art. Additionally, more funding opportunities for both individuals and exhibitions developed, particularly as a result of changes to the New Zealand arts infrastructure, most notably the creation of the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council. International art travel was also becoming more accessible as flight times became shorter, fares cheaper and more airlines began to operate across the Pacific. New Zealand also benefited from Australian success in soliciting interactions. From the US perspective, the growth in art-related contacts with Australia and New Zealand was part of the expanding presentation of American art and ideas about it across the globe.

In this chapter, I focus first on the visits to the United States by John Coley in 1964 and Jim Allen in 1968, and the visit by the influential American critic Clement Greenberg to New Zealand in 1968. I then look in depth at *Contemporary American Painting from the James A. Michener Collection* which was exhibited in New Zealand in 1965 and primarily featured recent art from the US East Coast. Following this, I consider the four exhibitions supplied by the Museum of Modern Art's International Program that toured New Zealand in 1966 and 1967. These mechanisms of exposure have, for the most part, received little attention in previous literature, yet each had important implications. First, however, I will briefly consider the conflict that had developed in Vietnam in the 1960s. This was viewed by the US government as part of the wider Cold War, and defined its political relations with New Zealand (and Australia) for close to a decade, from the early 1960s through to the early 1970s. The countries were military allies and for both the conflict was also extremely contentious domestically. As such, it forms an important backdrop to the art-related interactions and encounters being discussed in this chapter and those that follow.

## The Vietnam War<sup>355</sup>

The conflict in Vietnam had deep roots, but central to it was that, from the 1950s, the US government increasingly came to view Vietnam as a frontline in its battle against Communism. As a result, it had propped up the government in South Vietnam as a counter to the Communist-run North, led by Ho Chi Minh. But the situation had deteriorated rapidly from 1960, when the South Vietnamese government was confronted by insurgency mounted by the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam. Consequently, the US government increased its non-combatant military and economic assistance, and put pressure on its allies, including Australia and New Zealand, to also provide support.<sup>356</sup> As the nascent conflict continued to escalate, and as the US government wanted to demonstrate that it was not acting unilaterally but had broader regional support, it also advised the New Zealand and Australian governments that, should the conflict be expanded to include the deployment of ground troops, they might be asked to contribute to this.

Following the Gulf of Tonkin incident in August 1964, the United States bombed targets in North Vietnam, and in March 1965 it undertook a more comprehensive bombing campaign, known as Operation Rolling Thunder. This was shortly followed by the deployment of US combat troops. In response, the Australian government authorised sending troops, but the New Zealand government remained cautious, expressing its concerns over the consequences of military escalation. However, in April 1965, President Johnson sent his special envoy, Henry Cabot Lodge, to New Zealand, who emphasised the political value to the United States of any kind of military contribution from New Zealand. As a result, on 27 May 1965, the New Zealand prime minister, Keith Holyoake, announced that a combat unit of New Zealand troops was to be sent to Vietnam to help defend against “communist aggression.”<sup>357</sup> As Rabel points out, one of the key reasons behind the New Zealand government’s decision to send troops to Vietnam was the calculation of the effect that not doing anything might have on New Zealand’s relationship with the United States,

---

<sup>355</sup> The key source for the following discussion is Roberto Rabel, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War: Politics and Diplomacy* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2005).

<sup>356</sup> From 1960 to 1972, the New Zealand government would be run by the conservative National Party.

<sup>357</sup> *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates* 342: 1, quoted in Rabel, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War*, 1.

although it also supported “the overall strategy of containing communism in Southeast Asia.”<sup>358</sup> Through the later 1960s, both the United States and Australia continued to increase their troop levels, and this put pressure on New Zealand to follow suit. In 1967 the government increased New Zealand’s deployment with two infantry companies and, by the end of 1968, there were around 550 New Zealand personnel in Vietnam, representing their peak level for the war.<sup>359</sup>

In November 1968, however, Richard Nixon was elected president, and entered office in January 1969 with the aim of taking the United States out of Vietnam. Subsequently, he began to withdraw US troops, although this was coupled with the continuing expansion of the bombing campaign and incursions into Cambodia in 1970 and Laos in 1971. For the New Zealand government, this change in policy led to the question of when and how New Zealand should disengage from the conflict. Most New Zealand combat forces were pulled out by the end of 1971, and the final withdrawal of two training teams occurred at the end of 1972 following the election of Norman Kirk’s Labour government in November. Direct US involvement ended in January 1973, following a ceasefire agreement between North and South Vietnam. This did not, however, resolve the conflict and fighting continued until the North defeated the South in April 1975.

Domestically, as Rabel argues, New Zealand’s involvement led to “the most acrimonious and enduring debate about a specific foreign policy issue in New Zealand history.”<sup>360</sup> Prior to 1965 there had been limited concern in New Zealand over the situation in Southeast Asia outside political circles. However, when the United States began its bombing campaign in 1964 and it became clear that it was seeking New Zealand military support, opposition began to grow and groups resisting the war began to form. Although Holyoake’s announcement that combat troops would be sent did not immediately generate significant new dissension, over the next few months more anti-war groups sprang up and the issue became hotly debated around the country. People involved in the visual arts also protested against the war. For

---

<sup>358</sup> Ibid., 351.

<sup>359</sup> In total, around 3,500 New Zealanders would be involved in the conflict in some capacity.

<sup>360</sup> Rabel, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War*, 1.

example, several signed a full page advertisement, published in newspapers around the country on 20 October 1966 entitled “Peace in Vietnam,” that called for

- Cessation of the bombing in Vietnam.
- Withdrawal of N.Z. troops from Vietnam.
- Immediate REPLACEMENT of N.Z. Combatant Forces in Vietnam with extensive non-combatant humanitarian aid in S.E. Asia.<sup>361</sup>

Included in its signatories were the director of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, J. D. C. Edgar; the art historian, E. H. McCormick; the writer and collector, Charles Brasch, and artists Leo Bensemann, Donald Binney, Leonard Booth, John Drawbridge, Alison Duff, Patrick Hanly, Colin McCahon, Selwyn Muru, Don Peebles and Toss Woollaston. However, at this early stage there was little broader public support for the protest movement, although a visit in 1967 by Air Vice-Marshal Ky, the unelected prime minister of South Vietnam (then under control of a military junta), did lead to demonstrations. The period 1969 to 1972 marked the height of the protest movement, with the largest demonstration taking place on 30 April 1971 when “between 29,000 and 35,000 people took to the streets in largely peaceful and orderly protests.”<sup>362</sup> Even so, the protest movement in New Zealand did not reach the same degree of intensity as it did in the United States, due to New Zealand’s isolation, its relatively minimal involvement and the lack of conscription.

In considering the relationship of the war in Vietnam to art-related interactions, there are two key issues. The first is the question of the extent to which exhibitions sent out from the United States to Australia and New Zealand can be read in relation to the conflict, which I will examine closely in relation to those distributed from MoMA. The second is how it affected individuals, addressed in the next section.

### **Individual Interactions**

Individual encounters steadily increased through the 1960s, and central to this development were the Arts Advisory Council, the QEIIAC (the body that replaced the AAC), the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Elam School of Fine Arts at the University of Auckland. The AAC was a body established by the Department of Internal Affairs in 1960 as part of the policy of Walter Nash’s Labour government “to

---

<sup>361</sup> “Peace in Vietnam,” *NZH*, 20 October 1966.

<sup>362</sup> Rabel, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War*, 309.

stimulate and encourage the practice and growth of the arts.”<sup>363</sup> To fulfill this remit, the AAC created committees for music, drama, ballet and the visual arts, whose briefs included the administration of individual travel grants. The first person to receive such a grant was the artist Toss Woollaston,<sup>364</sup> who used it to travel to Europe, England and the United States for four months in 1962. In the United States he visited New York and Philadelphia, but his focus was primarily on European art, as demonstrated by the letters that he wrote to his wife Edith during his time there.<sup>365</sup> More pertinent, in the context of this thesis, was the AAC travel grant to the United States that John Coley applied for and received in 1963. Coley was an artist and art teacher who had graduated from the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts in 1958, after which he taught art at Papanui High School in Christchurch.<sup>366</sup> As an artist, he had participated in, and been involved in organising, the 1957 exhibition *Young New Zealand Artists* held at the Durham Street Gallery of the Canterbury Society of Arts. He was also represented in the three shows of contemporary New Zealand painting put together by the ACAG between 1961 and 1963. His travel grant was to study art education, but it also had an important impact on the art scene in Christchurch and the country more generally.

### John Coley in the United States

Coley left New Zealand in January 1964, travelling by boat to the United States.<sup>367</sup> He devised his own itinerary, landing in San Francisco and then visiting Los Angeles, Denver, New York, Philadelphia, Boston and Chicago, where he went to art museums, galleries, art schools and universities, and also met with a number of artists. In total, he spent three months away, returning to New Zealand in May 1964. In my discussion with Coley, he stated that the biggest impact that this trip had on him stemmed from the opportunity to see first-hand examples of the numerous recent

---

<sup>363</sup> Department of Internal Affairs annual report, *AJHR*, 1961, H22, 7.

<sup>364</sup> Department of Internal Affairs annual report, *AJHR*, 1962, H22, 24.

<sup>365</sup> These letters are reproduced in Jill Trevelyan, ed., *Toss Woollaston: A Life in Letters* (Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2004), 283-90. For example, in New York, although he visited MoMA, he only wrote of his experience of one of Monet's *Water Lilies*, Picasso's *Guernica* and an exhibition of that artist. Toss Woollaston to Edith Woollaston, 13 September 1962, *ibid.*, 285-86.

<sup>366</sup> Following his return from the United States in 1964, Coley took up a position in the art department of the Christchurch Teachers' College.

<sup>367</sup> John Coley, in discussion with the author, 21 October 2013. This is the source for the information on Coley that follows.



developments in art in the United States. He was particularly struck by the sheer physical size of modern American paintings, and remembers thinking that the scale was a reflection of the physical culture of their country of origin, which made New Zealand feel cramped by comparison. Coley also discussed the importance of an exhibition at the San Francisco Art Institute that included examples of Funk art. He remembers that he initially rejected much of the work on display, but during his return voyage to New Zealand he thought a great deal about this reaction, recognising that it was because these works had challenged his understanding of art. This realisation altered his conception of what art could be.

The most significant outcome that this trip had was that it led directly to the formation of the 20/20 Vision Group in Christchurch in 1964. This was a new art group that was welcomed by participants as an opportunity to make progress in their art. As Coley frames it, as a result of his experiences in the United States, he felt that he was in an excellent position to encourage experimentation amongst artists and so, prompted by a talk with fellow painter Quentin Macfarlane, he led the way in establishing the 20/20 Vision Group. Writing in 1968, Quentin Macfarlane also noted the importance of Tom Taylor, lecturer in sculpture at the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts. According to Macfarlane, it was through Coley and Taylor that “the idea of ‘collaborations’ or collective exhibitions became a stimulus that released a flood of work.”<sup>368</sup> A key part of this was that “artists were encouraged to experiment with new forms and materials and provide a forum for their most advanced ideas.”<sup>369</sup> The group held its first exhibition in 1965 at the Durham Street Gallery, as part of Christchurch’s first Pan Pacific Arts Festival. Coley explained that the idea of the show was to force exploration and experimentation, to encourage the participants to step outside their normal work and do something “wild.” He described the exhibition as the 20/20 Vision Group’s Armory Show, referring to the 1913 exhibition in New York that introduced Americans to avant-garde European art. A sense of the radical nature of the show is provided by Jill Trevelyan’s description:

At the entrance, Tom Taylor’s life-size plaster figure echoed viewers’ comments through a hidden microphone. Inside, quirky constructions, Op-art

---

<sup>368</sup> Quentin Macfarlane, “20/20 Vision Print Show,” *Ascent: A Journal of the Arts in New Zealand* 1, no. 2 (July 1968): 49.

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid.*

prints, and ‘paintings with bits that move’ vied for attention. Electronic music and novel display techniques helped set the scene (exhibits were hung on metal grids, backed against newspaper lined walls).<sup>370</sup>

In addition, John Simpson, reviewing the show for the *Press*, described it as “an exciting exhibition quite unlike anything seen here before,” and continued

while the influence of the glossy magazine can be felt here and there, what there is of pop or op seems to be op or pop with a difference. What may have started, tongue in cheek in an attempt to shock has become in the process, a genuine personal experience and ended on a sincere note.<sup>371</sup>

The 20/20 Vision Group would hold another exhibition at the Durham Street Gallery in June 1966 that furthered the same goals, and artists associated with it now also began to have their work shown around the country. For example, in 1965, Coley and David Graham were included in the ACAG’s touring exhibition *New Zealand Painting 1965*. Graham’s paintings were abstractions in a hard-edge style and Coley’s works demonstrated his experimentation with new materials and assemblage. The following year, Coley was asked by the ACAG to select the Christchurch contingent for *New Zealand Painting 1966* and three of the eight painters he chose were associated with the 20/20 Vision Group – Graham, Macfarlane and Trevor Moffitt. Additionally, in August and September of that year, the Barry Lett Galleries in Auckland held an exhibition entitled *Five 20-20 Painters* that featured works by Don Peebles (who had recently moved to Christchurch from Wellington), Michael Eaton, Coley, Macfarlane and Graham.

The group’s last exhibition was part of Christchurch’s second Pan Pacific Arts Festival in March 1968. For their contribution, twenty-five artists designed prints that were commercially silk-screened in editions of one hundred. These were then displayed and on sale for two dollars each at a car dealership and a shopping centre. This was the first such exhibition of multiples in New Zealand and Coley recalls that the idea derived from meeting Californian printmakers. A key aspect of this show, as demonstrated by the venues chosen and the low price of the prints, was to expose a wider range of the public to art and to make it affordable for them to purchase works,

---

<sup>370</sup> Jill Trevelyan, *A Canterbury Perspective. Since the 'Sixties* (Christchurch: Robert McDougall Art Gallery, 1990), np.

<sup>371</sup> H. J. [John] Simpson, “20/20 Vision Is Exciting Show,” *Press*, 26 February 1965.

and it was successful in meeting these aims. As Macfarlane observed at the time, “The public was intrigued with the idea and general quality of the show and the success of the venture from a commercial point of view, was proved by the near sell-out of some editions.”<sup>372</sup>

Coley’s trip, then, was not only important for his understanding of art and his artistic development, but also had important repercussions for the New Zealand arts scene through his involvement in the formation of the 20/20 Vision Group. This gave artists the opportunity to experiment and diversify their practice, and the United States was the key source of inspiration that led them to create and present work very different from most of the art then being produced in New Zealand. Subsequently, more New Zealanders would target the United States as a visual arts destination, aided initially by the creation of the QEIIAC.

#### Grants from the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council and the Carnegie Corporation of New York to New Zealanders

The QEIIAC had been formed in October 1963 by the National government under Keith Holyoake. In contrast to the AAC, which it superseded, the QEIIAC was an independent statutory body created by an Act of Parliament. It began operating on 1 April 1964 and established committees for music, drama, ballet and the visual arts. These basically continued the work of their AAC predecessors, including the distribution of individual travel grants, but with more money at their disposal. In its first year, it handed out ten awards in the visual arts,<sup>373</sup> with the painter Ted Bracey successfully applying for a teacher’s grant to travel to the United States. To supplement the money provided by the QEIIAC, Bracey also successfully applied for a CCNY travel grant through its Commonwealth Program, the first New Zealander involved in the visual arts to do so since Colin McCahon. Bracey subsequently toured the United States and Canada from the end of August to the end of December 1965. The report he submitted to the CCNY on his return to New Zealand described how his experiences had widened his understanding of possibilities in both art and art

---

<sup>372</sup> Macfarlane, “20/20 Vision Print Show,” 50.

<sup>373</sup> QEIIAC annual report, *AJHR*, 1965, H42, 24.

education, although this was tempered by concern about the ability of the education system in New Zealand to facilitate positive developments.<sup>374</sup>

Of the ten recipients of QEIIAC visual art individual grants in its first year, two travelled to the United States; Bracey and Frank Chilton, who visited that country as part of a tour that also included Britain, Europe, Australia and the Far East to study methods of production and distribution of film. Although I have not been able to ascertain if there were any artists who sought to study in the United States, at least two other individuals applied for teacher grants to travel there: John Ritchie and Don Driver. According to the minutes of the QEIIAC's Visual Arts Committee (VAC), Ritchie's application was approved,<sup>375</sup> but he does not appear on the list of recipients in the QEIIAC's 1965 report. For Driver, although his application was declined this was not a major setback as he was already planning to travel to the United States. He and his wife toured there from March to August 1965, an experience that had a major effect on his artistic practice.<sup>376</sup> It is unclear how many other applicants for awards in the visual arts over the next three years sought funds to travel to the United States, but at least the artist Don Binney received a grant in 1966 through which he was able to travel to Europe, North America, Mexico and Central America.<sup>377</sup> In addition, two other New Zealanders received grants from the CCNY. These were Professor John Simpson, the head of the School of Fine Arts at the University of Canterbury, and Hamish Keith, the curator at the ACAG.

Simpson applied in September 1965 for his grant to study art education in the United States as part of a year-long sabbatical that also included Britain and Europe.<sup>378</sup> One of his particular concerns was to introduce art history as a discipline at the School of Fine Arts; at this stage no New Zealand university had such a department. He did not

---

<sup>374</sup> Bracey to Stackpole, 24 March 1966, Series III A Box 438, CCNY Archives.

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>376</sup> For details of this trip and the effects it had on Driver's work, see Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, *Don Driver: A Survey of his Life and Works, Incorporating a Catalogue of the Don Driver 1965-1978 Exhibition* (New Plymouth: Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, 1979), 13-17; Leonard Bell, "Don Driver: On the Margins," *Art New Zealand* 18 (Summer 1981): 30-35; Gordon Brown, "Don Driver: Getting Things Together," in *With Spirit: Don Driver, a Retrospective*, ed. Priscilla Pitts (New Plymouth: Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, 1999), 15-16.

<sup>377</sup> Unfortunately I have not been able to uncover any further details of Binney's trip, or its impacts.

<sup>378</sup> Information on his experiences comes from a discussion between the author and Emeritus Professor Simpson, 28 March 2014. Simpson was also a member of the QEIIAC's VAC, and one of those who sat on the selection committee for travel grants. This potential conflict of interest may explain why he did not apply for a QEIIAC travel grant.

believe that the teaching of art history in Britain was a suitable exemplar for New Zealand, and viewed the United States as a more fruitful source. Simpson's grant was confirmed in December 1965, although he had to delay his travels until 1967. He spent four months in the United States, primarily visiting universities, art schools and art museums on the East Coast. Simpson valued his trip because of the personal contacts he made, the material that he gathered and the knowledge that he gained of administrative structures. He also had the opportunity to experience a wide range of art, both more traditional forms and the full scope of developments that had occurred in American art in the twentieth century, describing his exposure to Abstract Expressionist work as "a revelation." His trip influenced the teaching of art at the University of Canterbury: two concrete examples are the collection of slides he created for teaching purposes, and changes to the structure of its diploma in fine arts.

For Hamish Keith, as he stated in his formal application to the CCNY, his "area of study would be administrative structures, staff training programmes and extension services, with particular emphasis on the organisation and circulation of exhibitions."<sup>379</sup> He also received separate funds from the QEIIAC to include London, Amsterdam and Paris on his travels, which lasted from June to December 1967. In the official report that he presented to the Auckland City Council, he primarily focused on his time in North America, which he described as "by far the most profitable, both in terms of professional contacts and personal experience."<sup>380</sup> He offered observations on various aspects of the operations of US art museums, specifically their administrative structure, exhibitions and extension services, staff training, bookshops and publications, and new buildings. He also noted that there was an interest in exhibition exchanges, in particular from the Los Angeles County Museum.<sup>381</sup> However, in spite of the ideas that Keith expressed in his report, little change would occur at the ACAG as a result of his trip. It did not lead to any exhibitions from the United States, nor would a relationship with West Coast art museums develop, probably because Keith resigned from the ACAG in early 1970.

---

<sup>379</sup> Keith to the secretary, CCNY Travel Grant Committee, 11 March 1966, Series III A Box 744, CCNY Archives.

<sup>380</sup> Keith to J. Shaw, deputy town clerk, "Visit of the Keeper to the United States, Canada and Europe June-December 1967," 9 April 1968, [1], Information Files, HS 04/65, AAG Archives.

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*, [4].

Keith's experience of a vast range of art did, however, give his subsequent art criticism a wider perspective. Most notably, it exposed him to West Coast art, and in a piece for the *ACAG Quarterly* on his trip he reasserted the idea of a connection between that region and New Zealand. He first expressed this in geographical terms, noting that "The West Coast, like New Zealand, acquires many of its characteristics from the Pacific," and then further argued for cultural similarities:

Both are dependent cultures, both have acquired their cultural institutions and attitudes from somewhere else and both have suffered from the consequent crippling myth of cultural isolation. The process of emancipation from this cultural situation has gone a great deal further on the West Coast than it has here, but enough of it remains to support the idea of a possibly parallel development.<sup>382</sup>

Keith then wrote about his impressions of the state of the visual arts in that region, mentioning some of the cultural movements then prevalent, with a particular focus on the situation in California. He also wrote something of the political situation in California, describing it as both a place of radical thought and as "the home State of the United States' most hawkish hawks, its largest war-orientated industries and its most militantly brutal police forces."<sup>383</sup>

This last statement reflects the other major impact that Keith's trip had on him. As he details in his autobiography, through his visit he became aware of the various social problems gripping the United States at the time, which were intensified by the growing domestic conflict over Vietnam. He wrote, "I was turning on, not to dropping out but to the sharper experience of poverty, racism and injustice that young, white America was beginning to see against the bloody backcloth of the Vietnam War."<sup>384</sup> It was also as a result of his experiences in the United States that Keith decided to enter politics, albeit briefly, in order to "put culture on the political agenda," standing (unsuccessfully) for Labour in the Remuera electorate in the 1969 general election.<sup>385</sup>

---

<sup>382</sup> Hamish Keith, "Inside America and Beyond..." *Auckland City Art Gallery Quarterly* 42, 1968, 3.

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>384</sup> Keith, *Native Wit*, 211.

<sup>385</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

He also became more involved in the anti-Vietnam movement and was part of the protests against the visit of Vice-President Spiro Agnew in January 1970.<sup>386</sup>

Keith was not the only visual arts visitor affected in this way. For example, Bracey also became more politically aware as a result of his visit, both in relation to the Civil Rights movement (he was in Los Angeles two weeks after the Watts riots) and the contentiousness of the Vietnam War. On his return he produced several anti-war paintings, indebted to the silkscreen works of Robert Rauschenberg. He was also involved in an art auction that was part of a one day festival held on a farm in Oratia on 2 March 1969, organised by a group called the Arts for Vietnam Committee.<sup>387</sup> The art auction raised \$3,000, which was divided amongst the Walter Nash Memorial Fund for a children's wing for Quihon Hospital, the Red Cross operating in areas held by the National Liberation Front, and the Buddhist School for Social Services in Saigon.

### Jim Allen in the United States

Hamish Keith would shortly be followed overseas by Jim Allen, head of sculpture at the Elam School of Fine Arts, who undertook a sabbatical to England, France, the United States and Mexico in 1968. His main purpose was to visit art schools in England and the United States to gain knowledge of new teaching techniques and to experience recent developments in art. In a recently published interview with Tony Green, Allen has provided a full account of his time in the United States.<sup>388</sup> During his stay, he travelled to Boston, New Haven, New York, Philadelphia, Rochester (where he stayed with Wystan Curnow), Chicago and then, after a week in Mexico, Los Angeles and San Francisco. He visited universities, art schools and art museums and met with a range of artists. In his interview with Green, he particularly discussed his visit to see the sculptor Adrian Hall at Yale University, and his time in New York where he met with Peter Tomory, then lecturing at Columbia University, and with

---

<sup>386</sup> This protest turned violent and Keith was heavily involved with the group demanding an inquiry into police actions. See *ibid.*, 246-47.

<sup>387</sup> This was described by Michael Draffin as "the third similar effort made by artists and followers of the arts to raise funds in this way for this purpose." Letter to the editor, *Arts and Community* 5, no. 3 (April 1969): 2.

<sup>388</sup> Jim Allen with Tony Green, "1968 Research," in *Jim Allen: The Skin of Years*, ed. Gwynneth Porter (Auckland: Clouds and Michael Lett, 2014), 101-19.

Len Lye. Also of note were his experience of an Eva Hesse exhibition at MoMA, the Duchamp works at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and his visits to the Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia, the Field Museum and the University of Chicago art department. In a previous discussion with Curnow and Robert Leonard, Allen also recorded the exposure he had to riots and student protests (which was a common theme of his trip as a whole), and spoke of the freedom that characterised art in the United States, noting that “some of the thinking was quite crazy, but that was part of the liberation.”<sup>389</sup>

Following his return to New Zealand, Allen was instrumental in developing Post-Object art in New Zealand. This encompassed concept-, action- and performance-based practices and positioned New Zealand art directly in relation to other contemporary art movements around the world. Allen would explore these ideas in his own practice and through his teaching at Elam, where he changed his style and encouraged a new generation of sculptors to employ different ways of thinking. As Christina Barton relates, “Allen’s encouragement of a more open teaching situation coupled with his interest in new media and technology, provided the context for the development of performance, video, environmental installations, and light and sound sculpture.”<sup>390</sup> Allen’s time in the United States provided some of the impetus for these developments, but it is important to acknowledge that his experiences in other countries were of equal significance. For example, the protests at British art schools and the ideas these generated had a major impact on his educational thinking, and his exposure to non-Western art, specifically that from Latin America, was also of particular value to his practice.<sup>391</sup> Moreover, although his encounter with Len Lye in New York was significant, he had also sought out examples of kinetic art in London.<sup>392</sup> Regardless, the development of Post-Object art would provide an important local context for the exhibition *Some Recent American Art*, to be examined in Chapter Five, that came to New Zealand in 1974 and contained works relating to American Minimalist, Conceptual and Performance art.

---

<sup>389</sup> Wystan Curnow and Robert Leonard, “Contact: Jim Allen Talks to Wystan Curnow and Robert Leonard,” *Art New Zealand* 95 (Winter 2000): 52.

<sup>390</sup> Barton, “Post-Object Art in New Zealand,” 16.

<sup>391</sup> Tyler Cann and Mercedes Vicente, “Points of Contact,” in *Points of Contact: Jim Allen, Len Lye, Hélio Oiticica*, ed. Christina Barton, Tyler Cann and Mercedes Vicente (New Plymouth: Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, 2011), 10-11.

<sup>392</sup> Curnow and Leonard, “Contact: Jim Allen Talks to Wystan Curnow and Robert Leonard,” 51.



## Americans in New Zealand

Although less frequent, the bodies discussed above also enabled Americans associated with the visual arts to travel to New Zealand. First, in the early 1960s, the University of Auckland appointed two Americans as lecturers at the Elam School of Fine Arts, who provided an important stimulus to students. In 1962, Kurt von Meier took up the position of senior lecturer in the history and theory of fine arts, and the following year Arthur Lawrence came as visiting lecturer in the same subject. They would return to the United States in 1964 and 1965 respectively. Von Meier had studied Spanish art and culture at the University of Madrid and received his MFA from Princeton University in 1962, while Lawrence specialised in Italian Romanesque and Renaissance art. Von Meier in particular, however, had an important impact beyond historical art. As Simon Franks wrote in his thesis on Elam, “The ‘new spirit’ at Elam in the nineteen-sixties was perhaps most manifest in the figure of Kurt von Meier,” further noting that “so forceful was his promotion of ‘modern art’ and its concepts, and his denigration of academically-inspired art, that at one end-of-year grading session at the School, he and ‘Mac’ McLaren ended the day in physical confrontation.”<sup>393</sup> Likewise, Hamish Keith in his autobiography recalls von Meier as a colourful and courageous person whose lectures “mainly comprised reading the morning’s editorial from the *Herald* and passionately fulminating.”<sup>394</sup> Both von Meier and Lawrence would also have a particular impact on Gretchen Albrecht. As Linda Gill records, von Meier made her aware of a variety of women artists, while from Lawrence she learned that “our inheritance as artists and scholars was not to be confined only to local, regional or national concerns but was inextricably bound up with the rest of the world.”<sup>395</sup>

In June 1962 von Meier also contacted Waldo Rasmussen, whose name had been given to him by the artist Ben Shahn and who had recently taken over as director of the Department of Circulating Exhibitions at MoMA, which was in charge of the

---

<sup>393</sup> Simon A. Franks, “Elam 1890-1983: A History of the Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland” (master’s thesis, University of Auckland, 1984), 47. Adam (Mac) McLaren had been a teacher at Elam since 1946 and was a firm believer in the classical tradition as the basis of art education. *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>394</sup> Keith, *Native Wit*, 185.

<sup>395</sup> Linda Gill, *Gretchen Albrecht* (Auckland: Random Century, 1991), 20.

International Program.<sup>396</sup> Von Meier specifically inquired about bringing in an exhibition of Shahn's work to New Zealand (the International Program was then touring a show of that artist's graphic works), and also about "the general program the Museum has as it might concern possible future exhibitions here."<sup>397</sup> In response, von Meier was informed that the Shahn exhibition already had a full itinerary, but was offered the show *Visionary Architecture* instead,<sup>398</sup> which he accepted. This consisted of a number of large photo panels with explanatory texts; artists and architects who featured in these included Theo van Doesburg, El Lissitzky, Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier. The exhibition was displayed first in Christchurch at the University of Canterbury's School of Fine Arts from 14 to 20 September 1962, and then in Auckland, where it was on view at the ACAG from 4 October to 4 November 1962. There was also a catalogue published in Auckland which featured various essays by staff at the University of Auckland.<sup>399</sup> However, von Meier's initiative would not lead to any further exhibitions from MoMA to New Zealand.

The CCNY also played a role in sending Americans to New Zealand in the 1960s, first sponsoring a trip by William Pierson, professor of art history at Williams College in Massachusetts, to New Zealand and Australia in 1965. This was related to Pierson's involvement in the CCNY's American Art Slides Project, which had originated in the Corporation's desire to improve American studies programmes in US colleges and universities.<sup>400</sup> Pierson travelled to New Zealand and Australia to lecture on American cultural history using these slides, and on his return was to advise the CCNY on sending out sets of the art slides to these countries, "and on the general condition of US cultural exchange with these areas of the Commonwealth."<sup>401</sup> Pierson arrived in New Zealand in June 1965 and gave a series of lectures in Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland, which were well received. For example, Dr. James Williams, the vice-chancellor of Victoria University, called it "a remarkable success from every point of view" and quoted a note which described Pierson as "one

---

<sup>396</sup> The International Program and Rasmussen's role will be discussed in more detail subsequently.

<sup>397</sup> Von Meier to Rasmussen, 15 June 1962, IC/IP I.A. 1084, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>398</sup> Mrs. F. A. Kolmetz, International Circulating Exhibitions, to von Meier, 25 June 1962, *ibid*.

<sup>399</sup> Elam School of Fine Arts, *Visionary Architecture* (Auckland: Pelorus Press, 1962).

<sup>400</sup> For details of this project, see Jubin, *Program in the Arts 1911-1967*, 8, CCNY Archives. For Pierson's role, see CCNY Record of Interview, 23 September 1963, Series III A Box 293, *ibid*.

<sup>401</sup> MEM [Margaret Mahoney] to members of the Commonwealth Travel Grant Committee, 3 January 1964, Series III A Box 293, CCNY Archives.

of the most successful ambassadors for American culture that we have met.”<sup>402</sup> In addition, Pierson spoke extensively with Professor Simpson and recommended him for a travel grant to Stephen Stackpole (the man responsible for the Commonwealth Program),<sup>403</sup> and suggested to Hamish Keith that he apply for a CCNY grant.<sup>404</sup>

The CCNY also provided funds for the most noteworthy of these visitors, Clement Greenberg, whose time in New Zealand would be facilitated by the QEIIAC. Greenberg’s visit to New Zealand had its origins in Australia. He had been invited by the Power Institute of Fine Arts in Sydney to give the John Power Lecture in Contemporary Art at the University of Sydney, and then lecture in other main cities in Australia. In addition, he was to attend the UNESCO Seminar on Criticism in the Arts to be held in Sydney in May 1968.<sup>405</sup> That this trip was subsequently extended to New Zealand was due to the initiative of Peter McLeavey, the Wellington art dealer, and John Maynard, director of the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery. McLeavey had been invited to attend the UNESCO seminar,<sup>406</sup> and it was presumably after noting Greenberg’s involvement in this that he and Maynard came up with the idea of bringing the critic to New Zealand.<sup>407</sup> They contacted the QEIIAC that then approached the CCNY, which subsequently agreed to fund the extension of Greenberg’s trip to New Zealand. The QEIIAC became Greenberg’s main contact in New Zealand for negotiations,<sup>408</sup> and arranged his itinerary and paid his lecture fees. Support also came from the US embassy.<sup>409</sup> Greenberg visited New Zealand from 25 June to 8 July 1968, travelling first to Christchurch, then to Dunedin, Wellington and Auckland.

---

<sup>402</sup> Williams to Stackpole, 24 June 1965, *ibid*.

<sup>403</sup> See Pierson to Stackpole, 22 November 1965, *ibid*.

<sup>404</sup> See Keith to Stackpole, 28 January 1966, Series III A Box 744, CCNY Archives.

<sup>405</sup> The seminar took place from 19-25 May. Greenberg gave a lecture on “Difficulties of Criticism” at a plenary session. That Greenberg’s trip to New Zealand had its origins in Australia parallels the exhibitions that will be discussed later.

<sup>406</sup> Jill Trevelyan, *Peter McLeavey: The Life and Times of a New Zealand Art Dealer* (Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2013), 72.

<sup>407</sup> In a letter to the director of the QEIIAC, dated 16 February 1968, McLeavey stated, “The impetus to contact Clement Greenberg came from John Maynard, Director of the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, as well as myself.” AANV, W3286, Box 2, ANZ.

<sup>408</sup> Greenberg had been uncertain whether or not he would be able to include New Zealand as he was waiting to hear if he would be asked to be a juror at the Venice Biennale. However, he confirmed his intention to come in a letter to Gordon White, the assistant to the director of the QEIIAC, dated 7 April 1968. *Ibid*.

<sup>409</sup> McLeavey noted, “Mr Charles Ransom, cultural attaché of the Embassy of the United States, Wellington, was also a pillar of strength. His advice and enthusiasm was important.” McLeavey to the director of the QEIIAC, 16 February 1968, *ibid*.

At the time of this visit, Greenberg was recognised as the most important critic of modernist American art. As Caroline Jones writes, his 1961 publication *Art and Culture* that brought together his essays on art “established Greenberg as the arbiter (the ‘voice’) of modernism for an expanded audience ranging from Saskatchewan to Vermont, London to Sydney, Durban, South Africa, to Washington, D.C.”<sup>410</sup> In the same year he had also given a lecture entitled “Modernist Painting” that was broadcast around the world by the Voice of America. Subsequently, as part of a range of activities through the 1960s, Greenberg became a cultural ambassador, travelling around the world in various capacities. Of particular note, he visited Japan and India in 1966 and 1967 respectively through US State Department funding to give lectures and interviews in association with the exhibition *Two Decades of American Painting*, sent out by MoMA’s International Program.<sup>411</sup> However, as John O’Brian notes, “Paradoxically, the recognition of Greenberg’s importance as a critic grew in inverse proportion to the direct influence of his criticism.”<sup>412</sup> Thus, by the time he came out to New Zealand his influence as an art critic had passed its peak, not least because the art which he had championed was being superseded by new trends.

Nevertheless, Greenberg’s visit was viewed as a significant event in New Zealand, with newspapers around the country reporting on it. Greenberg himself estimated that he spoke to close to a thousand people during his time in this country.<sup>413</sup> However, the critic received a mixed reception. Although John Coley recalls that his first lecture at the Canterbury Society of Arts attracted a large crowd,<sup>414</sup> it also generated negative reports from several newspapers. For example, the day after this lecture, the *Auckland Star* carried an article with the headline “Critic: NZ Art Can’t Exist” reporting that Greenberg had told his audience that “he had never heard of New Zealand art” and that “no one could expect New Zealand to turn out anything of any worth – not major

---

<sup>410</sup> Caroline A. Jones, *Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg’s Modernism and the Bureaucratization of the Senses* (Chicago: University Press, 2005), 303.

<sup>411</sup> Alice Goldfarb Marquis, *Art Czar: The Rise and Fall of Clement Greenberg* (Aldershot, UK: Lund Humphries, 2006), 215. Greenberg was firmly anti-Communist and, as such, was an acceptable person to receive official support from the US government, as well as entities such as the CCNY.

<sup>412</sup> John O’Brian, introduction to *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticisms*, vol. 3, *Affirmations and Refusals, 1950-1956* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), xix.

<sup>413</sup> Clement Greenberg, “Report on Speaking Tour of Australia and New Zealand,” 7 August 1968, 1, Series III A Box 744, CCNY Archives.

<sup>414</sup> Coley, discussion.

art – because it was too far away from New York, Paris and London, the art centres of the world.”<sup>415</sup> These were not the only criticism levelled at Greenberg. The Christchurch-based sculptor, Ria Bancroft, described this lecture as “something of an anti-climax,” writing that “his constant references to New York, London, Paris, Buenos Aires, India, Sao Paulo, and the Venice Biennale etc. etc. seemed like a travelogue, rather than a lecture on art.”<sup>416</sup> Similarly, in Dunedin, dissatisfaction was expressed over the slide-based focus of Greenberg’s presentation at the DPAG. A letter published in the *Otago Daily Times* complained that Greenberg’s lecture there “resembled a glorified slide evening at some ladies’ sunshine club,” and concluded, “It is not enough just to be shown slides of American avant garde paintings, with a few snippets of gossip from the New York art world thrown in.”<sup>417</sup>

In Wellington, about three hundred people attended Greenberg’s lecture,<sup>418</sup> and in Auckland, his final stop, he gave a lecture at the ACAG, went to a function at Barry Lett Galleries on the same night and then gave a slide presentation at the same venue the following evening.<sup>419</sup> As reported by Gordon Brown, at his talk at the ACAG, Greenberg once again

stressed the importance of major art centres as a necessary stimulus to the production of great works of art, giving special emphasis to New York’s emergence as such a capital and commenting on the structure as well as some of the liabilities of the New York art scene; a topic he felt was relevant to Auckland as the only New Zealand city having an established art scene.<sup>420</sup>

Notably, at the Barry Lett Galleries, as recorded by the *Auckland Star*, he addressed the initial criticism that his first lecture at the Canterbury Society of Arts had generated. The article stated that Greenberg believed he had been misquoted as saying that New Zealand art did not exist; instead, he argued that he was “making a

---

<sup>415</sup> “Critic: NZ Art Can’t Exist,” *AS*, 27 June 1968. Similar reports appeared in other newspapers. See for example, “NZ Art Not Admired,” *Daily News*, 27 June 1968; “Notable Art Not Expected from N.Z.,” *Press*, 1 July 1968.

<sup>416</sup> Ria Bancroft, “Reflections on the Visit of Mr Clement Greenberg,” *Canterbury Society of Arts News* 21, September 1968, [2].

<sup>417</sup> Loma Scarles, letter to the editor, *ODT*, 5 July 1968.

<sup>418</sup> “Art Blossoms Where Art is Nourished,” *EP*, 3 July 1968.

<sup>419</sup> “Too Sensitive, Says Critic,” *AS*, 8 July 1968.

<sup>420</sup> Gordon H. Brown, “The Auckland Scene,” *Ascent: A Journal of the Arts in New Zealand* 1, no. 3 (April 1969): 64.

distinction between good art and major art.”<sup>421</sup> The article noted that Greenberg felt that good art could exist in New Zealand but that “according to the record major work – work which influenced the mainstream of art history was unlikely to be produced here” because it was not a great centre, like Paris, London or New York.<sup>422</sup> To Greenberg, the way in which his comments were reported “indicated that New Zealanders in general were too sensitive about criticism.”<sup>423</sup> He did, however, express an appreciation for the work of Colin McCahon and Toss Woollaston and stated that “if New Zealand did produce a major artist he would be noticed.”<sup>424</sup>

Greenberg would reiterate many of these points in his subsequent report to the CCNY regarding his visit to Australia and New Zealand. Although he began this by restating the idea that neither country had “produced anything in painting or sculpture significant enough to attract serious notice elsewhere,” overall he was complimentary about Antipodean art, writing,

All the same, I was surprised by the very solid competence and taste exhibited by so much of the Australian – and New Zealand – painting I saw. In this respect I would judge the general run of Antipodean painting to be almost unique in this time.<sup>425</sup>

He also repeated his praise of McCahon and Woollaston, noting that “they would strike me anywhere,” and added, “They bear out my impression that, whatever else painters in the Antipodes may lack, they do not lack character, truth to themselves. I saw remarkably little flashy or superficially impressive art in Australasia.”<sup>426</sup> He also commented that both Australian and New Zealand art were now far removed from English art, suggesting that both countries had found an artistic voice of their own.<sup>427</sup>

From the US point of view, although Greenberg’s visit was certainly not overtly political, it was another example of the broader American desire to spread knowledge about its cultural achievement and foster goodwill. From the New Zealand

---

<sup>421</sup> “Too Sensitive, Says Critic.”

<sup>422</sup> Ibid.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid.

<sup>425</sup> Greenberg, “Report on Speaking Tour of Australia and New Zealand,” 2, Series III A Box 593, CCNY Archives.

<sup>426</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid.

perspective, the visit itself, the attendance at the lectures and the press coverage it generated showed the interest in modern American art that had developed in this country. It also gave New Zealanders a unique opportunity to hear first-hand from one of the key advocates of American modernism. But the mixed reception that Greenberg received was, I would argue, in part related to expectations that he would provide meaningful insight into recent artistic developments and disappointment that this was not fulfilled. This also suggests a growing recognition of the value and achievements of modern art as people sought more knowledge and understanding. Yet although his lectures were well attended, it is hard to gauge how influential they were. Certainly, neither Hamish Keith nor John Simpson felt that Greenberg's visit had any genuine impact on the New Zealand art scene,<sup>428</sup> although it could be argued that it was potentially of value to artists working in an abstractionist mode. Rather, I would suggest that its main significance lay in what it represented, that New Zealand was now increasingly being exposed to a greater range of ideas and becoming part of a globalised art world. This was also reflected in the increasing range of exhibitions that came into New Zealand in the mid-1960s, including *Contemporary American Painting from the James A. Michener Collection* and several from MoMA's International Program.

### ***Contemporary American Painting from the James A. Michener Collection***

In 1965, the exhibition *Contemporary American Painting from the James A. Michener Collection*, based on the private collection of the eponymous American novelist, was displayed in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin, following a tour of Australia. It consisted of forty paintings dated between 1955 and 1962, the majority by artists working out of New York. This gave many New Zealanders the opportunity to directly experience for the first time several recent trends in American art, and particularly art from the US East Coast. More broadly, it can be read in relation to the increasing importance being attached to modern American art. The Michener Collection itself was an expression of this, and its display in Australia and New Zealand reflected US aspirations to spread knowledge about its cultural achievements and to position the United States at the forefront of artistic developments.

---

<sup>428</sup> Hamish Keith, in discussion with the author, 22 October 2013; Simpson, discussion.

## The James A. Michener Foundation Collection

James Michener (1907-1997) was an enormously successful novelist who began to put together a significant collection of twentieth-century American art in 1961. He first purchased relatively traditional, representational works by older artists but then turned his attention to more recent paintings by artists associated with Abstract Expressionism.<sup>429</sup> His interest in the latter was stimulated in the 1950s particularly as a result of the time he had spent overseas. As he related in his foreword to the catalogue of the inaugural exhibition of his collection at the Allentown Art Museum in Pennsylvania, “It was in Europe that I became converted to the work of our abstract expressionists, for it became obvious that here was the first corpus of American painting that merited full comparison with the very best being done anywhere in the world.”<sup>430</sup>

From the beginning, Michener intended his collection to have a wider application, and so he sought to make it to some degree representative.<sup>431</sup> In addition, in 1962 he chose the Allentown Art Museum in Pennsylvania, under the directorship of Richard Teller Hirsch, to administer the collection.<sup>432</sup> However, as Michener continued to add to this, he displayed some circumspection in his approach to acquisitions that reflected newer developments. Hirsch made this clear in his introduction to the inaugural Allentown exhibition catalogue:

Admittedly, we find in the art mart of the '60's the lure of promoting – and, perhaps, of buying – the newest because of its proclaimed newness. However, with such a responsibility as building the Michener Collection, this lure must, most naturally, be subjected to searching evaluation, using, if possible, standards less modish than those of the current art press. This acquisitions process is a search for permanent values. The task of building the Collection is

---

<sup>429</sup> James A. Michener, “The Collector: An Informal Memoir,” in University of Texas at Austin, University Art Museum, *The James A. Michener Collection: Twentieth Century American Painting* (Austin: University of Texas, 1977), xii.

<sup>430</sup> James A. Michener, foreword to *The James A. Michener Foundation Collection*, by Allentown Art Museum (Allentown, PA: Allentown Art Museum, 1963), iii.

<sup>431</sup> Michener, “The Collector,” xii. He also acknowledged the role of personal taste in the formation of the collection. *Ibid.*, xiii.

<sup>432</sup> Hirsch, who had been appointed the first professional director of the Allentown Art Museum in 1959, would later become director of the ACAG, in 1972. The Allentown Art Museum was responsible for the Michener Collection until 1968, when Michener relocated it to the University of Texas in Austin where it still resides.



long range in two regards: the sagacious rhythm of acquisition and the lasting importance of the Collection thus wisely assembled.<sup>433</sup>

Through the Allentown Art Museum, loans were supplied to art museums both in the United States and overseas. By the time of its exhibition at Allentown in February 1963, paintings had already been sent to, among others, the Guggenheim Museum and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, the Des Moines Art Center, Iowa, the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, the Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels, and several museums in West Germany.<sup>434</sup>

### The origins of the exhibition and its development

The origins of *Contemporary American Painting from the James A. Michener Collection* can be traced first to the desire of Australian art gallery directors in the early 1960s to obtain an exhibition of modern American art. For example, both Hal Missingham, director of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, and Robert Campbell, director of the National Gallery of South Australia, had visited the United States and tried to engage institutions there to send out such an exhibition, but to no avail.<sup>435</sup>

Moreover, as Campbell later noted in a letter to Eric Westbrook (director of the National Gallery of Victoria), “many abortive attempts were made to bring an important collection of Contemporary American Art to Australia. We have a whole file of letters to various American Galleries asking for the loan of pictures.”<sup>436</sup>

Subsequently, when Daniel Catton Rich, the director of the Worcester Art Museum in Massachusetts, undertook a lecture tour to Australia in 1963, he was approached by art gallery directors there about how to obtain an exhibition of American art. From this point, the circumstances that led to an exhibition from the Michener Collection going to Australia, and then New Zealand, are convoluted. As such, they are

---

<sup>433</sup> Richard Hirsch, introduction to *The James A. Michener Foundation Collection*, ix.

<sup>434</sup> *Ibid.*, vii.

<sup>435</sup> Campbell had visited the United States in 1961 and solicited both the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, and MoMA in New York for exhibitions. Robert Campbell to James A. Michener, 25 July 1963, Archives of the Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin (hereafter cited as BMA Archives). Hal Missingham had visited in 1960-61 and had engaged art museums in discussions regarding a show of American art to Australia. Draft Press Release, MS 3940/5/6, Papers of Hal Missingham, 1899-1989, National Library of Australia. This reference was passed to the author by Eric Riddler, archivist at the AGNSW in an e-mail message dated 17 July 2013.

<sup>436</sup> Campbell to Westbrook, 1 September 1964, BMA Archives.

indicative of the complex negotiations that were often undertaken at this time to solicit shows.

Daniel Rich had first suggested the Michener Collection as a possible exhibition source to Robert Campbell in Adelaide. This led Campbell to write to Michener on 25 July 1963 in his capacity as chairman of the Visual Arts Committee for the Adelaide Arts Festival, asking if he would lend his collection for an exhibition to coincide with the festival scheduled for March 1964. As Campbell argued, such an exhibition “would have a tremendous impact on artists in Australia and would unquestionably further cultural relations between our countries.”<sup>437</sup> Michener, however, did not reply, and Rich set about exploring other options on behalf of his Australian colleagues on his return to the United States.<sup>438</sup> He approached Ben Heller, an important collector of modern American art, about sending his collection, and also discussed the idea with H. Harvard Arnason of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation. Just as Rich himself had done, Arnason thought of the Michener Collection, and he called Richard Hirsch to solicit his cooperation. Hirsch immediately agreed to the proposal; as he wrote to Michener in a letter informing him of his decision:

I told Arnason that this kind of use of the Collection was precisely what you had in mind. I think it is much more important that a substantial museum in a foreign country, where no American art has been seen heretofore, be given the advantage of the Collection than for even the best American museums to be serviced by us.<sup>439</sup>

At this stage, however, Hirsch put forward the NGV as the main venue for the exhibition as Arnason had told him that it was this museum that had expressed to Rich “their consuming desire to have a large and substantial exhibition of American contemporary art.”<sup>440</sup> Rich then sent a cable to Campbell, presumably because of their previous discussions, to appraise him of the situation and advised him to contact Hirsch. Campbell therefore wrote to Hirsch to ensure that the exhibition would be available for Adelaide’s Festival of Arts, opening in March 1964, after which it would

---

<sup>437</sup> Campbell to Michener, 25 July 1963, *ibid.*

<sup>438</sup> The Worcester Art Museum itself did not at this stage have a collection of modern American art.

<sup>439</sup> Hirsch to Michener, 29 October 1963, BMA Archives. Hirsch’s ability to make such a decision himself without consulting Michener demonstrates the autonomy he had. Michener replied to Hirsch on 4 November 1963 expressing enthusiasm for the project, which suggests that he had overlooked Robert Campbell’s earlier letter from Adelaide. Michener to Hirsch, 4 November 1963, *ibid.*

<sup>440</sup> Hirsch to Michener, 29 October 1963, *ibid.*

be toured to the other state galleries in Australia.<sup>441</sup> Hirsch agreed, and Campbell became the main contact for, and organiser of, the exhibition in Australia.

Attention now shifted to the composition of the exhibition. Here, both Michener and Hirsch were aware of the weaknesses of the collection in relation to some of the best-known modern American artists. For example, when Michener replied to Hirsch to express his enthusiasm for the project, he noted that “For a show of the kind Australia has in mind there are several sharp gaps,” specifically pointing to the lack of works by Jackson Pollock, Mark Tobey, Willem de Kooning, Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman.<sup>442</sup> He hoped, however, that Arnason “might have some ideas on how to fill those gaps, if that were held to be desirable.”<sup>443</sup> This was also a concern for Campbell, who in a letter to Rich referred to the lack of works by Pollock and de Kooning and stated that these artists, especially the former, “are really necessary... for contemporary American painting.”<sup>444</sup> Hirsch, in turn, acknowledged this, but emphasised the idea that the collection was able to provide, in general terms, what the Australians wanted. As he wrote to Campbell,

As you will see, the Collection does not include paintings by Pollock and de Koonig [*sic*]. Also lacking is Rothko and a few others. The Collection is, however, unusually representative and should provide your public with a very good survey.<sup>445</sup>

As it worked out, the only addition to the exhibition would be Jackson Pollock’s *Ocean Greyness*, 1953, from the Guggenheim, and this was only displayed in Adelaide.

The initial idea was that Campbell would select the works for the show and to this end Hirsch enclosed a catalogue of the paintings available for display with his letter of 11 November 1963. Campbell subsequently chose forty works, but his selection was quite broad, encompassing the full span of the Michener Collection.<sup>446</sup> Hirsch did

---

<sup>441</sup> Campbell to Hirsch, 6 November 1963, *ibid*.

<sup>442</sup> Michener to Hirsch, 4 November 1963, *ibid*.

<sup>443</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>444</sup> Campbell to Rich, 6 November 1963.

<sup>445</sup> Hirsch to Campbell, 11 November 1963, BMA Archives.

<sup>446</sup> Campbell to Hirsch, 27 November 1963, *ibid*. At this stage, Campbell maintained the hope that the Michener Collection could be supplemented with works by some of the better known modern

not believe this was in keeping with the original Australian request, and in his next letter to Campbell he sought to steer him away from some of his original choices, querying “whether such a survey would be as rewarding to your public or as instructive as a selection from the more recent segments of the Collection.”<sup>447</sup> Hirsch compiled his own list which he believed “would give [the Australian] public a clearer view of what is going on here now.”<sup>448</sup> Campbell had no qualms about acquiescing to Hirsch’s recommendations,<sup>449</sup> with the result that Hirsch assumed responsibility for the content of the exhibition. In doing so, Hirsch replied to Campbell, “I am delighted that the list I sent you appeals to you because I seriously think that what you should have for your public is contact with the current trends in American painting.”<sup>450</sup> Of note, Hirsch also reiterated the importance of Abstract Expressionism and its continuing relevance, writing,

I am well aware that art magazines are telling us that abstract expressionism is now entirely dead and that something very new has to take its place immediately. Nevertheless, the abstract expressionists are still very much around and still very active, so that that segment of the Michener Collection is highly representative.<sup>451</sup>

He also pointed out that the Collection contained examples of very recent work, adding that new purchases of work by George Ortman and Harold Stevenson (both of which would be in the exhibition) “are highly up to date and are about as new as tomorrow.”<sup>452</sup> This suggests that Hirsch recognised that new trends, such as Neo-Dada and Pop art, had come to prominence and as a result he wanted to emphasise both the continued significance of Abstract Expressionism and the up-to-date nature of the Michener Collection in order to reassure Campbell and pre-empt any further questions over its ability to provide the exhibition that the Australians wanted.

The exhibition arrived in Australia in March 1964, where it was displayed first at the National Gallery of South Australia as part of the Adelaide Festival of the Arts. It

---

American artists, as expressed in a letter to the other state art gallery directors, dated 26 November 1963, *ibid.*

<sup>447</sup> Hirsch to Campbell, 2 December 1963, *ibid.*

<sup>448</sup> *Ibid.* Hirsch removed older artists such as Thomas Hart Benton, Philip Evergood, William Gropper, Yasuo Kuniyoshi and Max Weber from Campbell’s list.

<sup>449</sup> Campbell to Hirsch, 9 December 1963, BMA Archives.

<sup>450</sup> Hirsch to Campbell, 12 December 1963, *ibid.*

<sup>451</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>452</sup> *Ibid.*

then traveled to Sydney, Brisbane, Newcastle, Hobart, Melbourne and Perth. The exact circumstances of how it then came to New Zealand are difficult to reconstruct, but it is clear that Peter Tomory and the ACAG once again played a central role. Although it is unclear exactly how Tomory found out about the exhibition, I have uncovered one piece of evidence that offers a likely explanation. This is a letter dated 27 April 1964 from the New Zealand consul general in New York, O. P. Gabites, to the secretary of External Affairs in Wellington, that was copied to Tomory and Stewart MacLennan at the National Art Gallery.<sup>453</sup> The main topic of the letter was sending an exhibition of New Zealand art to the United States, an issue that will be considered in greater detail in the next chapter. However, Gabites also mentioned that Harvard Arnason had informed him of the Michener Collection's current tour of Australia, and had told him that if galleries in New Zealand were interested it would probably be possible for the tour to be extended. Subsequently, probably at some point in July, Tomory contacted Hal Missingham at the AGNSW to request details.<sup>454</sup>

Missingham's reply prompted Tomory to write to Hirsch to ask if it would be possible to extend the tour to the four main centres in New Zealand, noting that "the Arts Council of New Zealand is prepared to underwrite the costs of the exhibition."<sup>455</sup> Hirsch subsequently sent a long reply dated 24 August 1964 that outlined various concerns regarding the extension of the tour to New Zealand.<sup>456</sup> He was particularly worried about the condition of the paintings and crates following the end of the Australian tour, as well as questions of liability should there be any damage. However, he was also very keen to send the exhibition to New Zealand, writing,

I hope you realize that, in sharing with you my qualms about the condition of the selection, I have only adverted to what is my first responsibility. This should not be interpreted in any way as diminishing my enthusiasm for an opportunity to bring to the public in New Zealand some excellent examples of what is going on in the American art field. The purpose of the Michener

---

<sup>453</sup> Gabites to the secretary of External Affairs, cc. director, NAG and director, ACAG, 27 April 1964, MU000007\008\0005, Te Papa Archives.

<sup>454</sup> I have not uncovered the correspondence between Tomory and Missingham, but it is mentioned in the letter from Tomory (signed on his behalf by McCahon) to Hirsch, 6 August 1964, BMA Archives.

<sup>455</sup> Ibid. At its first meeting, the VAC had already agreed to offer a subsidy for the exhibition, even though a tour had not yet been confirmed. Minutes, QEIIAC VAC, 23 July 1964, 4, AANV, W3286, Box 2, ANZ.

<sup>456</sup> Hirsch to McCahon, 24 August 1964, BMA Archives.

Collection is precisely this one and our philosophy is emphatically in the direction of making the Collection as broadly useful as possible.<sup>457</sup>

He concluded by stating, “You may interpret this letter as being an authorization for the four exhibitions which you mention within the framework of the comments made above.”<sup>458</sup> Tomory replied on 10 September 1964 to allay Hirsch’s concerns, and Hirsch responded soon after giving authorisation for the tour to go ahead based on the assurances that had been provided.<sup>459</sup> As a result, the exhibition was displayed at the ACAG from 2 to 23 March 1965, followed by Wellington from 1 to 20 April, Christchurch from 30 April to 16 May, and finally Dunedin, from 28 May to 15 June.

### The exhibition

Hirsch’s final selection consisted of forty artworks, the majority dating from the late 1950s to the early 1960s, by thirty-nine artists. To give a better sense of the nature of the exhibition, and to understand its impact more fully, I will consider a selection of the works, focusing on both the most radical and innovative and those by the better known artists. These were the works most frequently mentioned by New Zealand critics, and the ones most likely to have had the greatest impact on viewers and artists. In doing so, I acknowledge the limitations of defining artworks according to specific movements. However, such an approach is relevant here, not only because Hirsch presented the selection in relation to current trends in American art, but also because this was one of the ways in which critics sought to understand the exhibition and communicate information about it. Here, both the 1977 catalogue of the Michener Collection, published by the University of Texas at Austin, and the website of the Blanton Museum of Art at the same institution, where the artworks now reside, are of particular value, providing both images and specific information on works.<sup>460</sup> In its final form, Hirsch’s selection had a strong emphasis on Abstract Expressionism, with paintings from both first and second generation practitioners of this style. However, there were also works by artists recently identified by Clement Greenberg with a

---

<sup>457</sup> Ibid.

<sup>458</sup> Ibid.

<sup>459</sup> Tomory (signed on his behalf by S. D. Cockerill, the ACAG secretary) to Hirsch, 10 September 1964; Hirsch to Cockerill, 18 September 1964. BMA Archives.

<sup>460</sup> University of Texas at Austin, University Art Museum, *The James A. Michener Collection: Twentieth Century American Painting*; The Blanton Museum of Art’s Online Collections Database, accessed 15 June 2013, <http://collection.blantonmuseum.org/>.

movement he had defined as Post-Painterly Abstraction, as well as paintings that related to Neo-Dada and Pop art. Finally, there were others by artists harder to classify in terms of movements, or who sat outside recent developments, such as works by older artists like Ben Shahn.

Although the Michener Collection did not contain paintings by many of the key figures associated with Abstract Expressionism, Hirsch's selection did feature some notable names and gave a sense of the variety that existed under this broad stylistic term. The most prevalent tendency in the show was gestural abstraction, which was also the most widely recognised form of Abstract Expressionism at the time of the exhibition, due to its association with Jackson Pollock. The paintings by the three best-known artists in the exhibition, Hans Hofmann, Franz Kline and Philip Guston, can be classified in this way. Hofmann was the only artist represented in the show by two paintings, *X Orange*, 1959 (figure 22), and *Elysium*, 1960 (figure 23). Both are from the last phase of his career and demonstrate his concern with pictorial structure, and spatial and colour relationships. *X Orange*, the smaller of the two at 133.1 x 154.3cm, is an energetic work featuring thick brushstrokes of pure, intense colour. Blues of differing shades predominate, but set against this are varying patches of white, orange, yellow, green and red that spatially create "an active system of weights and balances."<sup>461</sup> *Elysium*, a larger piece at 214 x 127.7cm, offers a different response to the same concerns: rectangles of high intensity colours, orange, red, blue and green, are placed against a more loosely painted ground, producing "an interplay of textures and finishes in which saturated color areas contrast with textured surfaces, increasing the activity and tensions of the work."<sup>462</sup>

Franz Kline's painting, *Black and White No. 2*, 1960 (figure 24), is representative of the type of work with which he is most associated. It is a tall, monochromatic work, measuring 203.9 x 155cm, dominated by rectilinear shapes. It features large black horizontal and vertical brushstrokes that convey the sense of extending beyond the frame, of being part of a greater whole. Yet a sense of immediacy is suggested by the small spatters of black paint that dot the white surface. Guston's *The Alchemist*, 1960

---

<sup>461</sup> University of Texas at Austin, University Art Museum, *The James A. Michener Collection: Twentieth Century American Painting*, 162.

<sup>462</sup> *Ibid.*

(figure 25), demonstrates the artist's exploration of the process of painting; it is heavily overpainted with only vestiges of early layers of green and orange visible. The composition is instead primarily made up of grey brushstrokes and areas of blue, black and dark red. One of these, an oval blue shape, has the suggestion of a face, and "its magical dominance of the composition gives the painting its name."<sup>463</sup> Other, less well-known, first generation Abstract Expressionists in the exhibition included Giorgio Cavallon and Theodoros Stamos, and there were also several artists associated with the second generation of this movement, such as Stephen Pace and Conrad Marca-Relli, who had come to prominence in the 1950s. The most notable of these, however, was Joan Mitchell, one of only two women in the exhibition. Her painting in the exhibition, *Rock Bottom*, 1960-61 (figure 26), is in a gestural abstractionist mode and is another relatively large work, measuring 198.1 x 172.7cm. It utilises thick, broad brushstrokes in rich colours with blue predominant, the long strokes and drips and spatters conveying a strong sense of spontaneity. However, rather than filling the canvas, Mitchell has created a clear central focus set against a field of white.

The seven artists included whom Clement Greenberg had identified by the term Post-Painterly Abstraction in a 1964 exhibition of the same name were Sam Francis, Helen Frankenthaler, Alfred Jensen, Ellsworth Kelly, Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland and Raymond Parker.<sup>464</sup> Their paintings represented some of the most innovative on display. With the exception of Frankenthaler, these artists had all developed their art outside New York. Noland and Louis were based in Washington, DC, and both Francis (who had studied art in California) and Kelly spent a large part of their early careers in France. Frankenthaler was an artist also associated with gestural abstraction (which highlights the difficulty of categorising artists), but she was included by Greenberg in the *Post-Painterly Abstraction* exhibition because her work displayed many of the characteristics he used to define this movement. Central to this was her development, in 1952, of her own particular technique of pouring thinned oil paint onto a canvas on the floor. The canvas absorbed the paint thus creating a stain effect and a closer relationship between image and surface. Through the 1950s she had

---

<sup>463</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>464</sup> Greenberg's show was displayed first at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, then travelled to the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis and the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.



continued to modify and expand her practice, and her painting in the Michener exhibition, *Lise's Supper*, 1960, demonstrated her recent step towards the use of stronger colours and how her approach had become more gestural. As the Michener collection catalogue records, "Stained forms are counterbalanced by abrupt spurts and splatterings of gesturally applied paint and whimsical, arbitrary arabesques."<sup>465</sup>

Frankenthaler's innovation also had a profound impact on Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland. Both these artists explored implications arising from Frankenthaler's developments, specifically the importance of process and the interrelationship of colours. For example, Louis developed a method of pouring thinned acrylic paint down the surface of a vertical canvas so that the paint soaked into it, and created several different series in which he explored this new way of picture-making. The work in the Michener exhibition, *Water-Shot*, 1960 (figure 27), is from the last of these, known as the Stripes. It is a spare work measuring 214.7 x 135.3cm, which has as its central focus a column of nine vertical stripes in different colours. These begin at the bottom of the canvas, narrowing as they extend upwards.<sup>466</sup> Although Louis compressed the intense colours together, they still retain a sense of the luminosity that is a feature of his mature paintings. Noland's work in the exhibition, *Split Spectrum*, 1961 (figure 28), is an excellent example from one of his best-known series, the Targets. In this, Noland has created a centralised image of five concentric bands of colour stained into the canvas in blue, yellow, light purple, brown and red, each separated by a band of white, with a maroon circle in the middle. It is a restrained work, yet has a pulsating quality. The formal nature serves to both concentrate the viewer's attention on the colour relationships and create a sense of rhythm and space. Ellsworth Kelly's work, *High Yellow*, 1960 (figure 29), was also concerned with colour relationships but took a different approach. During his time in France, Kelly had developed a non-objective, geometric imagery of high-value primary colours that he continued to develop on his return to the United States. *High Yellow*, with its bold colours and simple, clearly defined shapes fits within this mode. It is also suggestive of landscape, a yellow sun against blue sky with the green earth below and, as such, it is reflective of the origins of much of Kelly's work in the natural world.

---

<sup>465</sup> University of Texas at Austin, University Art Museum, *The James A. Michener Collection: Twentieth Century American Painting*, 110.

<sup>466</sup> Louis would have poured the paint from what is now the bottom of the painting, something which was missed by the installers at the ACAG who hung it upside down (figure 33).

There were also paintings in the exhibition that demonstrated the increasing impact of Neo-Dada and Pop art, although the collection's coverage of newer developments such as this was limited, in part because of Michener's circumspect approach to acquisitions. One example is Larry Rivers's *Dead Veteran* from 1961 (figure 30). Rivers was one of the key gestural figurative artists working in New York in the 1950s, but he also came to be associated with Pop art, and *Dead Veteran* relates to both these styles. It is a representational painting that was part of a series based on the death of the last Civil War veteran, inspired by two photographs in *Life* magazine. On the one hand, it operates as a contemporary history painting carried out in a gestural manner, but the fact that it drew on mass media images also positions it in relation to Pop art. Another artist in the exhibition whose work is often associated with Pop art, as well as Neo-Dada, is Jim Dine, though, as with Rivers, defining his work strictly in these terms is problematic. His painting, *Four Coats*, 1959 (figure 31), was the largest work in the show at 183.9 x 306.4cm. It depicts extreme close-ups of four coats, with real buttons added to the surface. Dine's aim is to make the viewer aware of ordinary objects, and can be related to a common feature of the assemblages of both Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg and to Pop art. Finally, George Ortman's *The Good Life, or Living by the Rules*, 1960 (figure 32), was one of the more radical works in the show. This is a construction of wood and canvas painted in bright colours, featuring a selection of geometric shapes on the right and holes containing ping-pong balls on the left. As the Michener Collection catalogue records, "The surface of the canvas is made up of strips of canvas which have been torn and laid over the support, thus adding to the sculptural illusion of the work."<sup>467</sup> Suggestive of a game board or puzzle, it combines a sense of playfulness with formalist concerns through its use of colour and the juxtaposition of shapes.

### Framing the exhibition

Hirsch's selection offered a stimulating array of recent American art by a variety of artists and he would also be responsible for framing an understanding of the show, through his introductions in the catalogues that accompanied it. The introduction that

---

<sup>467</sup> University of Texas at Austin, University Art Museum, *The James A. Michener Collection: Twentieth Century American Painting*, 257.

he wrote for the New Zealand catalogue was longer and slightly different from the Australian one, although the basic ideas presented were essentially the same.<sup>468</sup>

Hirsch sought to emphasise the importance of the show, provide some background on American art and offer a way to view the exhibition. He thus began by describing the exhibition as “a significant selection of contemporary American paintings,” writing further,

Not all of the trends of contemporary painting could be included in this important exhibition.... Nevertheless, great effort has been made to survey the many directions being taken by American artists and, also, to provide what we feel is a valid indication of future developments which may well arise from these current outlooks.<sup>469</sup>

He next noted that he had been asked “to point out the regional basis within the U.S.A. from which the artists represented here derive their styles and approaches to the pictorial problem.”<sup>470</sup> Presumably this request came from Tomory as it related to his continuing belief and interest in this idea. Hirsch, however, argued against such a viewpoint, stating, “It is, I believe, a commentary on the art of our time that parochial categories, grounded in geography, are virtually meaningless and become more so with every passing day.”<sup>471</sup> To Hirsch, it was only the Socialist Realist art of Communist countries that offered “a dissonant note to the tone of the prevailing International School.”<sup>472</sup>

Hirsch then provided some background to the development of modern art in the United States, and noted that it was in the wake of World War II that “American art flowered into its own idiom and shortly gained influence and leadership in the world art scene thanks to the vigorous independent expressions of those who have been called the ‘Action Painters’.”<sup>473</sup> He next offered some comments on the most recent

---

<sup>468</sup> In one of his letters to the ACAG, Hirsch expressed dissatisfaction with the Australian introduction, because of the word limit imposed on him, and suggested that he rewrite the text for the New Zealand catalogue. Hirsch to Cockerill, 18 September 1964, BMA Archives.

<sup>469</sup> Richard Hirsch, “Contemporary American Painting,” in *Contemporary American Painting from the James A. Michener Collection Allentown Art Museum, Pennsylvania*, by Auckland City Art Gallery (Auckland: Wakefield Press Limited, 1965), [2].

<sup>470</sup> Ibid.

<sup>471</sup> Ibid.

<sup>472</sup> Ibid.

<sup>473</sup> Ibid.

trends in American art, though he suggested caution regarding their long-term value, arguing that

some of these paths may prove to be dead-ends if it is found that, as in some aspects of Pop Art, the premise that *anything* is art if only the builder of it, or assembler of it, or the paster-upper of it, proclaims himself to be an artist, may be a very sterile one in the end.<sup>474</sup>

Finally, he concluded by providing a clear framework for viewers, stating,

The present exhibition surveys all but the most desperately extreme trends in the contemporary American picture. The selection has, we believe, the merit of reasonable comprehensiveness: it also defines the many sources from whose flow future American styles will evolve. In presenting this exhibition to the public of New Zealand, we feel that we are offering excellent representative works by serious Americans and not mere reflections of temporary fads and fashions. What is to be seen here is significant, as part of the American artist's view of his world and as a comment upon what he conceives to be his purpose.<sup>475</sup>

This, then, was how the exhibition, and recent American art in a broader sense, was presented to the New Zealand audience by Hirsch. There are several aspects worth commenting on. First, as the original idea behind the Michener exhibition had been to present a representative selection of contemporary American art, it is understandable that Hirsch positioned the show in these terms. Second, his discussion of regionalism was notable, contrasting with the presentation of earlier exhibitions to New Zealand that had featured American art, specifically *Painting from the Pacific* and *Drawings from West Coast USA*. Instead Hirsch emphasised the concept of an international style in art, implicitly placing American art at the forefront of this. Finally, Hirsch's questioning of the long-term value of some of the most recent developments in American art was intended to justify the nature of the selection and to present the exhibition, and the Michener Collection, in the most favourable light.

However, by the time of the display of the Michener Collection in New Zealand in 1965, these new trends had clearly surpassed Abstract Expressionism as the most vibrant and cutting edge art coming out of the United States. From the mid-1950s, the

---

<sup>474</sup> Ibid., [3].

<sup>475</sup> Ibid.

work of, for example, Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns had offered a challenge to that movement, and in the early 1960s Pop art had also emerged as a major force in American art, with the work of Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein at the forefront. Internationally, the significance of these new developments was most visibly signalled by the contents of the US pavilion at the 1964 Venice Biennale and the subsequent awarding of the grand prize for painting to Rauschenberg. Organised by Alan Solomon, the director of the Jewish Museum in New York, the US contribution consisted of works by eight artists: Rauschenberg, Johns, Kenneth Noland, Morris Louis, John Chamberlain, Claes Oldenburg, Jim Dine and Frank Stella.<sup>476</sup> As Hiroko Ikegami argues, Solomon's selection presented "the vigor of American art in relation to American popular culture," and it was this that had the greatest impact on viewers.<sup>477</sup> But only three of these artists were represented in the Michener exhibition – Noland, Louis and Dine. However, even though the exhibition did not accurately reflect the current state of modern American art, it nevertheless provided a valuable opportunity for New Zealanders to see examples of modern art from the US East Coast, many for the first time.

### New Zealand responses to the exhibition

The Michener exhibition received extensive press coverage, with most of the major newspapers carrying reviews and articles on the show, as did the *New Zealand Woman's Weekly*. In terms of the public response, Hamish Keith, then the acting director of the ACAG, wrote to Hirsch to inform him that "the collection has generated a considerable amount of excitement amongst the public and painters and we are extremely indebted to you for making this collection available to this Gallery."<sup>478</sup> William Baverstock, director of the Robert MacDougall Art Gallery, noted that "the exhibition was quite well attended here, students being by far the most

---

<sup>476</sup> The USIA had taken over responsibility for the US pavilion for the 1964 Biennale and had invited Solomon to act as its commissioner. He had put on several major shows of recent American art at the Jewish Museum in New York, including retrospectives of Rauschenberg and Johns and a group show entitled *Towards a New Abstraction* that featured Colour Field painting. See Hiroko Ikegami, *The Great Migrator: Robert Rauschenberg and the Global Rise of American Art* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2010), 59-63.

<sup>477</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>478</sup> Keith to Hirsch, 4 March 1965, BMA Archives.

interested people,”<sup>479</sup> and Charlton Edgar, the director of the DPAG, wrote that the exhibition “was very successful, with a great many of the younger generation for a welcome change.”<sup>480</sup> However, Ross Ritchie, who was a gallery assistant at the ACAG at the time, recalls that the exhibition received little attention from the general public, but notes that which it did receive was intense.<sup>481</sup>

In relation to this, Associate Professor Leonard Bell, an art historian at the University of Auckland, remembers the impact that the exhibition had on him as a teenager previously unfamiliar with contemporary American art,<sup>482</sup> and for artists especially it was a show of major importance. New Zealand artists were by this stage increasingly familiar with the work of American artists, and the Michener exhibition gave many their first opportunity to see modern American painting in the flesh, particularly that from the US East Coast, examples of which had not previously come to New Zealand. Ritchie, for example, recalls his own particular interest in American artists, especially Larry Rivers (who was little known at the time in New Zealand), and noted the value of seeing such works first-hand to his own artistic practice. He also recalls that Milan Mrkusich was a regular visitor, and I would argue that the potential significance of this has been overlooked. Mrkusich was a pioneer abstractionist who sought to keep up with the latest developments in overseas art, showing especially a keen interest in American Abstract Expressionism in the early 1960s.<sup>483</sup> However, as he did not travel overseas until 1982, the Michener exhibition was his first chance to experience directly recent developments that informed his own practice; Wright and Hanfling do not mention this in their monograph. Finally, both Quentin Macfarlane and John Coley, recent graduates from the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts at the time, remember that the exhibition made a significant impression on artists working in Christchurch, particularly those involved with the 20/20 Vision Group.<sup>484</sup> Coley, who had recently visited the United States, recalls that the exhibition bore out what he had been saying about American art to his peers regarding the physical size of the canvases and the importance of surface and

---

<sup>479</sup> Baverstock to Edgar, 18 May 1965, Exhibition File 13D, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu Archives (hereafter cited as CAG Archives).

<sup>480</sup> Edgar to Keith, 10 June 1965, DPAGS II 38/16 1965, Dunedin City Council Archives.

<sup>481</sup> Ross Ritchie in discussion with the author, 28 May 2014.

<sup>482</sup> Leonard Bell in discussion with the author, 20 March 2014.

<sup>483</sup> Wright and Hanfling, *Mrkusich*, 27-30.

<sup>484</sup> Quentin Macfarlane in discussion with the author, 18 November 2013; Coley, discussion.

texture.<sup>485</sup> He elucidated these ideas in a review of the exhibition for the *Press*, where he was able to utilise his knowledge of American art to contextualise the show.

The critical responses were mainly positive, with several recurring themes in the reviews. First, there was a general belief in the significance of the show, though this was tempered by the recognition that a number of major American artists were missing, leading reviewers to critique Hirsch's presentation of the show. For example, Coley pointed out the value of the exhibition as "a glimpse of the diverse styles which make up the mainstream of serious painting in the United States," but also argued,

Although the preface to the catalogue described the collection as 'reasonably' comprehensive, thus allowing that there were a few gaps, it was nevertheless disappointing to note the absence of such giants of American painting as Pollock, Motherwell, De Kooning, Gottlieb, Rothko and Tworkov.

All are artists whose influence on American art has been considerable and any exhibition claiming any degree of comprehensiveness which does not include their work must necessarily be something less than first-rate.<sup>486</sup>

However, he was still very positive about the show, emphasising its worth to "painters and art lovers" as an

opportunity of studying the finer points of the techniques employed by established, internationally respected, painters. Thus gaining information almost impossible to glean from reproductions, where the full impact of large scale is lost and all variety of surface is reduced to a uniform, bland polish.<sup>487</sup>

In a similar vein, the sentiment that the exhibition could offer a point of comparison for New Zealand artists (as *Painting from the Pacific* had done) was also put forward. Here, Beverley Simmons wrote,

Apart from the excitement of seeing some near-contemporary American painting, the chief value of the James A. Michener Collection at the Auckland Art Gallery is that it can act as a touchstone for New Zealand painting.

The truth of the matter is that there are several New Zealand painters whose works could hold their own in this company.<sup>488</sup>

---

<sup>485</sup> Coley, discussion.

<sup>486</sup> John Coley, "Images from the New World," *Press*, 18 May 1965.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid.

<sup>488</sup> B. B. [Beverley Simmons], "Michener's Choice a Touchstone for N.Z. Artists," *NZH*, 3 March 1965.

Related to this was the idea expressed by Gordon Brown that New Zealand artists had a lot in common with their American counterparts. This continued a line of thinking that had been raised in relation to *Painting from the Pacific*. Moreover, Brown articulated this in similar terms to those that had previously been employed by Peter Tomory, writing in his review, “The vigour, the direct, sometimes brutal handling of paint, the visual daring – as well as the uncertainty which leads to fads and shallowness, are things we share, or can learn more about.”<sup>489</sup>

The reviews also made a general effort to define and categorise what was on display. Thus, Simmons stated in her article that the show “offers examples of all the American schools which have flourished since the Second World War.”<sup>490</sup> She mentioned several artists in relation to action painting, even making a distinction between the “splash and dribble” of some artists and the “broad-brush lunge” of others.<sup>491</sup> She also noted that there was “a good leavening from the ‘hard edge’ school.”<sup>492</sup> Coley distinguished three major schools in the show: Abstract Expressionism, hard-edge and figurative, and gave a brief description of each.<sup>493</sup> He also drew attention to the fact that what was in the exhibition was certainly not the most radical work being produced in the United States at this time, something which he was aware of from his own first-hand experience. As he wrote,

To anyone who saw the exhibition and felt that it represented the outrageous expressions of demented juveniles, it may come as something of a surprise to learn that it is, in fact, rather conservative and middle of the road compared with much of the experimental work to be seen in galleries throughout the United States today, and that the exhibiting painters are not as youthful as such apparently revolutionary work might suggest.<sup>494</sup>

There was also some discussion of specific artists and artworks, though space constraints meant that there was little detailed analysis. Such names as Hofmann,

---

<sup>489</sup> Gordon Brown, “Art in Our Time as Seen through American Eyes,” *AS*, 4 March 1965. Brown was at that point working at the Elam School of Art Library, though he would soon take up a position at the ACAG.

<sup>490</sup> Simmons, “Michener’s Choice a Touchstone.”

<sup>491</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>492</sup> *Ibid.* Simmons referred to the Kelly work as *The Refusal*, rather than by its actual title, *High Yellow*.

<sup>493</sup> Coley, “Images from the New World.”

<sup>494</sup> *Ibid.*



Kline, Frankenthaler, Noland, Rivers and Dine were mentioned regularly, and praise and criticism offered in equal measure. For example, Gordon Brown described Lester Johnson, Dine and Harold Stevenson as illustrative of “the negative side of Americanism where content is sacrificed to originality,” but was positive about several others, including “the purity and simplicity of Louis and Noland” and “the brooding immediacy of Kline.”<sup>495</sup> The most mixed response came from John Oakley, who had recently visited the United States.<sup>496</sup> In an article simply called “Modern American Art Shown in City,” Oakley was critical of modern American art generally, making such comments as “American artists are painting larger and larger canvasses – often about less and less.”<sup>497</sup> He then made brief comments on a selection of the works. He described Jim Dine’s *Four Coats* as “quite the most pointless work” and called the paintings by Ellsworth Kelly and Morris Louis both “childish” and “pretentious,”<sup>498</sup> but offered praise for others, especially those that tended towards representation. He also wrote positively about some of the Abstract Expressionist work, including the paintings by Kline and Hofmann, describing the latter’s works as “well planned” and “painted with verve and assurance.”<sup>499</sup> His conclusion continued this ambivalence:

This exhibition is most comprehensive and each picture is well worth studying. The visitor may ask himself ‘is this Art?’

It is, but all art is not necessarily good art, particularly when it comes to abstract expressionism.

The longest article on the exhibition appeared in the *New Zealand Woman’s Weekly*. Written by Jo Noble and entitled “Modern Art: What’s It All About?,” it was based on a conversation with Hamish Keith and presented as an entry point for looking at the works in the exhibition. Keith offered guidance on how to look at and understand the paintings on display, giving such advice as “the important thing about these paintings is that they WORK by the way they make you feel. They are not so much to look at as to experience. It’s an experience you can live.”<sup>500</sup> More specifically, he

---

<sup>495</sup> Brown, “Art in Our Time.”

<sup>496</sup> Oakley was a painter and critic as well as a lecturer at the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts.

<sup>497</sup> John Oakley “Modern American Art Shown in City,” *Star*, 3 May 1965.

<sup>498</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>499</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>500</sup> Jo Noble, “Modern Art: What’s It All About?,” *New Zealand Woman’s Weekly*, 14 June 1965, 24.

talked about the paintings by Mitchell, Louis, Dine, Kline, Hofmann, Frankenthaler and Marca-Relli. Of particular interest is that his discussion of Dine's *Four Coats* was followed by a broader explanation of Pop art. Described as "an art form in vogue at present and one that tells much of modern day life,"<sup>501</sup> it used Roy Lichtenstein and his comic strip panel paintings as examples, even though Lichtenstein was not represented in the exhibition. This demonstrates that Pop art was now an international phenomenon and that the exhibition could be a jumping off point for wider discussion. Notable too was that the article was accompanied by colour photographs of several of the artworks (figure 31), as well as an installation view of the show from the mezzanine floor of the ACAG (figure 33). This is the only such shot that I have been able to locate of the exhibition in any gallery. It shows the paintings tightly spaced, but not cluttered, in contrast to the installation of *Painting from the Pacific* in the same space, where the works were, of necessity, crowded together.

In comparison to previous discussions of exhibitions from the United States, New Zealand critics now demonstrated an increasing familiarity with modern American art and there was also a greater effort to engage with the artworks. There was limited reliance on the catalogue, with critics confident of making their own assessments, and they even offered critiques of Hirsch's presentation. The potential value to artists was recognised, with some critics suggesting not just that New Zealand artists could learn from such works but that they also could be compared favourably to them. Such judgements could only be confidently made through direct exposure to American art in exhibitions like this.

From a wider perspective, the Michener exhibition was a concrete example of the desire amongst those involved in the visual arts in both New Zealand and Australia to present modern American art to their local audiences. This, in turn, can be related to the international promotion of modern American art that had occurred partly as a result of the Cold War. Exhibitions such as *Jackson Pollock, 1912-1956* and *The New American Painting* that were circulated to Europe by MoMA's International Program in 1958-59 were key examples of this process and by the mid-1960s there was a general belief in the primacy of modern American art, and particularly that from New

---

<sup>501</sup> Ibid., 25.

York. As Alan Solomon, the commissioner of the US pavilion at the 1964 Venice Biennale, had written in a widely distributed handout: “The fact that the world art center has shifted from Paris to New York is acknowledged on every hand.”<sup>502</sup> This was reinforced by Rauschenberg’s achievement in winning the grand prize for painting. The Michener exhibition thus functioned as another example of the way in which modern American art was disseminated, and was itself part of the international process whereby the United States became recognised as the dominant force within modern art. Here, it is significant that the exhibition was based on a private collection; private individuals and organisations were important mechanisms for the distribution of American culture, and their efforts often functioned as another form of US cultural diplomacy. From this point of view, it is possible to read the Michener exhibition in a political sense, although there is no evidence that it was explicitly motivated by the demands of US foreign policy. The situation regarding exhibitions sent out to this part of the world through MoMA’s International Program is, however, less clear.

### **Exhibitions from the Museum of Modern Art’s International Program**

Previous interactions between MoMA and New Zealand had been limited. As discussed, Monroe Wheeler, the director of the Department of Exhibitions and Publications at MoMA, had sent out a selection of books to New Zealand in 1955 and subsequently visited the following year, and the International Program had sent out two exhibitions, *Contemporary American Printmaking* in 1959 and *Visionary Architecture* in 1962. These were effectively one-off events, but in 1966 and 1967 the International Program would send out four exhibitions to New Zealand. This was related to the Program’s expansion of its operations and the relationship that it developed with Australia, but from the New Zealand point of view it was once again Peter Tomory who played the key role.

---

<sup>502</sup> Alan Solomon, “Stati Uniti,” *CVB XXXII*, 272, quoted in Nancy Jachec, *Politics and Painting at the Venice Biennale, 1948-64: Italy and the Idea of Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 182.

## The International Program

As outlined in Chapter One, MoMA's International Program had been formed in 1952 partly as a response to the US government's unwillingness to use modern art as part of its Cold War propaganda and in relation to a belief in the value of cultural exchange to combat negative impressions of the United States. For the first few years, its primary focus was Europe, with only sporadic activities in other countries. Later, however, there was a growing desire to expand the International Program to other parts of the world on a more consistent basis. In 1960 MoMA's Department of Circulating Exhibitions, which was responsible for the International Program, proposed a five-year programme to achieve this. In keeping with the original aims of the Program, this was expressed in terms of US foreign policy needs, as a way to promote American culture and art as part of the broader project of encouraging positive views of United States across the globe. The opening paragraph of this proposal stated,

Today, more than ever before, the importance of cultural exchange with other nations has become widely accepted as a paramount objective for our country. Since World War II the enormously increased volume of exchange of persons, of the performing arts and of the visual arts, has proven the effectiveness of cultural interchange as a means for creating goodwill among the people of different countries. Increased activity in this field has also made clear the importance of cultural exchange in enhancing the prestige of the United States abroad.<sup>503</sup>

The document noted the success of the large-scale exhibitions of American art that the International Program had sent to Europe, which were "an important influence in stimulating interest in American art throughout the world."<sup>504</sup> It recognised the numerous requests that MoMA had received for exhibitions of American art elsewhere, and thus proposed sending major exhibitions to cities in Latin America, Australia, India, Pakistan and Japan, and smaller exhibitions "to provincial communities which seldom have the opportunity of seeing original works of American art."<sup>505</sup>

---

<sup>503</sup> "A Proposed Five-Year Program of International Cultural Exchange in the Visual Arts," 4 November 1960, IC/IP IV.A.153, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>504</sup> Ibid.

<sup>505</sup> Ibid.

However, in 1961, Porter McCray resigned as director of the Department of Circulating Exhibitions and was replaced by Waldo Rasmussen, who took over in 1962. Rasmussen positioned the purpose of the International Program differently. Rather than being specifically intended to promote American art, as had been its purpose under McCray, Rasmussen instead believed that its goal was “to help other communities see works of art they wouldn’t otherwise see.”<sup>506</sup> Rasmussen was also interested in expanding the operations of the International Program, but his initial concern was with Latin America and from 1962 the International Program began sending out exhibitions to countries in that region.

Australia and New Zealand were not on Rasmussen’s immediate agenda, however. Thus, it would primarily be through the efforts of individuals in Australia and New Zealand in soliciting exhibitions from MoMA that the International Program would be expanded to these countries. The 1962 exhibition *Visionary Architecture* offered an example of this, but the catalyst for the extension of the operations of the International Program to Australia (and then New Zealand) on a more consistent basis was a meeting between Rasmussen and John Stringer, the exhibitions officer at the NGV, during the latter’s trip to New York in July 1964. At this meeting these two men discussed sending exhibitions to Australia, and Rasmussen specifically mentioned three possibilities for tours: *Jacques Lipchitz: Bronze Sketches, Abstract Watercolours by 14 Americans*, and a large exhibition of recent American art that was planned for Japan.<sup>507</sup> On his return to Melbourne, Stringer discussed these exhibitions with his director, Eric Westbrook, who was eager to secure them.<sup>508</sup> In a later letter to Stringer, Rasmussen wrote,

I want to assure you how enthusiastic we in the Museum feel at the prospect of at last beginning a more comprehensive series of exhibitions for Australian circulation. This has been a desire on our part for many years, and I hope now it can be realized.<sup>509</sup>

---

<sup>506</sup> Oral History Program, interview with Waldo Rasmussen, 1 November 1994, 28, MoMA Archives, NY. As Rasmussen subsequently stated in this interview, the “primary difference” was the “whole concept of the International Program being more a service to other institutions as the primary function rather than trying to promote the cause of American art.” Ibid., 29.

<sup>507</sup> The last would become *Two Decades of American Painting* that toured Australia in 1967.

<sup>508</sup> Stringer to Rasmussen, 14 August 1964, IC/IP I.A. 1375, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>509</sup> Rasmussen to Stringer, 15 December 1964, ibid.

Subsequently, five exhibitions were sent to Australia from 1965 to 1967, four of which would also come to New Zealand.

### The New Zealand perspective

From the New Zealand perspective, a relationship with MoMA's International Program developed as a result of two interrelated factors: the desire of the QEIIAC's VAC to take an active role in bringing in and touring overseas exhibitions to New Zealand, and the efforts of Peter Tomory in his role as exhibitions officer for the QEIIAC. This aspect of Tomory's time in New Zealand has never been explored.

At its inaugural meeting, held on 23 July 1964, the VAC appointed a sub-committee to investigate the question of exhibitions, and the full committee discussed the issue in depth at a meeting held on 9 November 1964. Tomory was invited to speak because of his experience in organising a range of exhibitions and his previous position as honorary exhibitions officer to the AAC. Tomory, who had resigned from the directorship of the ACAG in August 1964,<sup>510</sup> offered to continue as exhibitions officer, now for the QEIIAC, for another two years, as he was concerned that as a result of his leaving the ACAG "there could be a gap of perhaps a year before any lag was taken up" and that "he could not speak for the attitude his successor might take towards exhibitions."<sup>511</sup> The VAC decided to take up his offer, although it only envisaged Tomory's appointment as a temporary solution; its longer term goal was to centralise exhibition administration.<sup>512</sup> Although this did not eventuate, in the shorter term Tomory worked with both the ACAG and NAG to tour exhibitions. At a meeting of the VAC on 17 June 1965, this arrangement was formalised to some extent by the establishment of an exhibitions steering committee consisting of Tomory, the director of the NAG, Stewart Maclellan, and Tomory's replacement as director of the ACAG, Gil Docking. The committee attempted to plan a regular programme of touring exhibitions for the country, and that included exhibitions from MoMA.

---

<sup>510</sup> Tomory was to take up a position at the Elam School of Fine Arts, although he did not leave the ACAG until January 1965.

<sup>511</sup> Minutes, QEIIAC VAC, 9 November 1964, 3, AANV, W3286, Box 2, ANZ.

<sup>512</sup> To this end it recommended that the QEIIAC "take steps to appoint an Exhibitions Officer with the necessary staff and accommodation so that all exhibitions can be organised and controlled by Council through the Committee when the interim period has expired." Ibid., 3.

The immediate circumstances that led to the renewed relationship with MoMA was a visit to New York by Tomory in September 1965, the main purpose of which was for Tomory to attend a conference of the International Council of Museums. However, it also presented him with the opportunity, in his capacity as exhibitions officer for the QEIIAC, to investigate the possibility of sending an exhibition of New Zealand art to the United States (discussed in the next chapter) and to obtain exhibitions of American art for New Zealand. The primary evidence that I have uncovered for this is a report written for the VAC by O. P. Gabites, the New Zealand consul general in New York (the same person who had informed Tomory about the Michener exhibition). The consulate arranged for Tomory to meet with several people who might be able to offer assistance in bringing an exhibition of New Zealand art to the United States, which included two important people at MoMA, Dorothy Miller, curator of Museum Collections, and Rasmussen. Tomory also met with Robert Luck, head of the Department of Special Programmes at the American Federation of Arts, which distributed exhibitions both around the United States and internationally as a part of its activities. As Gabites's report noted, Tomory also looked into "the possibility of arranging for American paintings both in public and private collections to be shown in New Zealand."<sup>513</sup> Here he recorded that both MoMA and the American Federation of Arts "expressed great enthusiasm for this, and seemed as keen to have American paintings shown in New Zealand as we are to have New Zealand exhibitions in the United States of America."<sup>514</sup>

As a result of this, Tomory was able to establish a dialogue with the International Program that would lead to the following exhibitions coming to New Zealand: *Jacques Lipchitz: Bronze Sketches, Abstract Watercolours by 14 Americans, Architecture Without Architects* and *The Photographer's Eye*. Of these, of particular interest for this thesis are *Abstract Watercolours by 14 Americans* and *The Photographer's Eye*. These received more press coverage than the other two and had more impact, offering a still rare chance for New Zealand viewers to see examples of Abstract Expressionist work from New York in the former case, and the first major show of photography to come to New Zealand in the latter.

---

<sup>513</sup> "Exhibition of New Zealand Art in the United States," 17 November 1965, 1, Minutes and related papers concerning the QEIIAC VAC, 1963-1966, MS-0924/001, Hocken Collections, Dunedin.

<sup>514</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2.

## The exhibitions

Jacques Lipchitz was an important European modernist sculptor who had emigrated to the United States after the German invasion of France in 1940, settling in New York. The show of his work was displayed at the ACAG and the NAG in February and March 1966 and consisted of 158 bronze casts of small maquettes (the largest just under three feet high) that Lipchitz had made throughout his career. As the artist wrote in the catalogue, the exhibition was “the first time in my life that the work is all together and presented chronologically showing the total stream of my thoughts, ideas, and encounters.”<sup>515</sup> It traced his practice from the Cubist approach that he had developed in Paris through to his increasingly organic American sculptures that utilised open space and curvilinear forms. It was the largest exhibition of sculpture to have come to New Zealand to this point and, as an article in the *New Zealand Herald* noted, it provided “an excellent opportunity for tracing the stylistic development of one of the foremost sculptors in America.”<sup>516</sup>

*Abstract Watercolours by 14 Americans* was displayed at the RMAG and the ACAG in May and June 1966 and was made up of fifty-four works selected by Frank O'Hara, MoMA's assistant curator of the Department of Painting and Sculpture Exhibitions. The artists included in the exhibition were Norman Bluhm, Lilly Brody, James Brooks, Giorgio Cavallon, Sam Francis, Helen Frankenthaler, John Grillo, Al Held, Paul Jenkins, Matsumi Kanemitsu, Lee Krasner, Stephen Pace, Leo Rabkin and Stanley Twardowicz. The earliest work dated from 1951, but most were from the 1960s. It was presented as an innovative show because different types of media were utilised, not just traditional watercolour. As O'Hara wrote in the introduction to the catalogue: “It is characteristic of each of the artists represented here to find inspiration in the unique qualities of their materials, and in so doing they have made watercolor an intrinsic, rather than peripheral, contributor to the total meaning of their work.”<sup>517</sup>

The exhibition generated a mixed response in New Zealand. It was not well-received in Christchurch, with Baverstock writing to Tomory that “this exhibition was not well

---

<sup>515</sup> Jacques Lipchitz, foreword to *Jacques Lipchitz: 158 Bronzes 1912-1962* [Wellington: Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, 1963], [3].

<sup>516</sup> “Sculpture from a Master,” *NZH*, 5 February 1965.

<sup>517</sup> Frank O'Hara, introduction to *Abstract Watercolours by 14 Americans* [Australia: 1965], [2].



attended (less than 800) and remarks of displeasure became monotonous and bad for public relations. Japanese Children's Paintings, following immediately restored the balance and were enjoyed by more than 4,000.<sup>518</sup> Reviewers in that city were also critical of the show, in part due to their high expectations for exhibitions from MoMA. As John Simpson wrote in his review for the *Press*, "It is incredible that an exhibition selected for circulation in Australia and New Zealand by the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, should contain such a high proportion of indifferent works."<sup>519</sup> Although he then went on to criticise several works in the exhibition, he did offer some praise as well, singling out four ink studies by Kanemitsu as "the really outstanding works in the exhibition" and concluded by noting that "in spite of these remarks, the exhibition is well worth visiting."<sup>520</sup> John Oakley, in keeping with his review of the Michener exhibition, was less forgiving. He once again demonstrated his generally conservative attitude to art, and particularly abstract art, writing, "The abstract qualities of a work of art are what make it tick, yet without subject matter, as is the case in this exhibition, these qualities add up to little more than pretty decoration or to mere academic exercises."<sup>521</sup> He followed this with a request for a more representative display, arguing, "A water-colour exhibition with a broader coverage would have given a much better idea of what is being done in America to-day – and it isn't all abstract."<sup>522</sup>

The press reports from Auckland were more positive, although they too mixed criticism and praise. In the *New Zealand Herald*, T. J. McNamara described the exhibition as "typically American in its great diversity," writing further,

The first impression that the show makes is of superficiality and triviality; there seems to be too much reliance on the accidental effect and the colour seems strident and unsubtle. But on the credit side there is an immediate impression of verve and gusto; the works are not small and almost all show a great deal of vigour of attack.<sup>523</sup>

---

<sup>518</sup> Baverstock to Tomory, 11 July 1966, Exhibition File 15, CAG Archives.

<sup>519</sup> H. J. S. [John Simpson], "Abstract Water-Colours," *Press*, 21 May 1966.

<sup>520</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>521</sup> John Oakley, "America [*sic*] Abstract Art Show," *Star*, 24 May 1966.

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>523</sup> T. J. McNamara, "Diversity in U.S. Painting," *NZH*, 10 June 1966.

In the *Auckland Star*, Imric Porsolt offered a personal review of the exhibition, writing that the artists in the show “especially speak in the first person, and exclusively about the first person. Can they object if the critic does the same?”<sup>524</sup> Like Simpson, he commended in particular the works of Kanemitsu and also wrote appreciatively of Jenkins’s *Long Blue* and the offerings from Krasner, Francis and Cavallon. But he expressed unease over Brody’s works and was scathing in his assessment of Brooks, questioning “the efficacy of a gimmicky splashism unparalleled [*sic*] in this show.”<sup>525</sup>

The third exhibition, *Architecture without Architects*, consisted of 122 photographs and text panels, described in the press release as “a survey of communal architecture with examples from 60 countries, ranging from the undatable past to the present.”<sup>526</sup> It opened at the ACAG on 21 July 1966, after which it travelled to the Dominion Museum in Wellington, RMAG, Sarjeant Art Gallery and finally the Napier Art Gallery and Museum. Porsolt called it “a fascinating exhibition, well-worth seeing,”<sup>527</sup> and in Christchurch, Simpson was effusive in his praise, describing it as “an exhibition not to be missed.”<sup>528</sup> The next show was *The Photographer’s Eye*, arguably the most important of the exhibitions sent out by MoMA in this period. This toured to the four main galleries from July to November 1967 and was not only the largest exhibition of photography to have come to New Zealand, but also presented photography as an artistic medium. Based on an exhibition originally displayed at MoMA in 1964, it was selected by John Szarkowski, director of MoMA’s Department of Photography, and consisted of 150 photographs, from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. A broad historical survey of the medium, it contained a mixture of reportage, photo-journalism and more artistic works by the likes of Eugene Atget, Bill Brandt, and Henri Cartier-Bresson, as well as key American photographers such as Charles Sheeler, Paul Strand and Edward Weston. While not a radical exhibition, it offered a good general introduction to the development of photography and some of its key concerns.

---

<sup>524</sup> I. V. Porsolt, “And Here’s a First Person Response...,” *AS*, 18 June 1966.

<sup>525</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>526</sup> *Architecture without Architects* press release, IC/IP I.A. 1229, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>527</sup> I. V. Porsolt, “Architectureless Architecture,” *AS*, 25 July 1966.

<sup>528</sup> H. J. S. [John Simpson], “Communal Architecture,” *Press*, 13 October 1966.

Tomory was responsible for organising the New Zealand tour itinerary, but the Wellington photographer John B. Turner also played a major role in the delivery of this exhibition.<sup>529</sup> Turner was a dedicated proselytiser of photography as an artistic medium in New Zealand and sought ways to expose New Zealanders to international developments. In July 1966, for example, he had written to Grace Mayer, curator of photography at MoMA, to request the *Family of Man* exhibition, stating, “I can think of no exhibition more suitable to teach the meaning of photography to the people of New Zealand.”<sup>530</sup> Although nothing came of this, Turner maintained a correspondence with MoMA and, when he became aware of the possibility that *The Photographer’s Eye* might come to New Zealand, he wrote to Mayer to confirm this.<sup>531</sup> Turner was understandably excited by this prospect and asked her to send further information.<sup>532</sup> Mayer responded positively and sent a copy of the catalogue and also had Rasmussen forward Turner an exhibition assembly check list.<sup>533</sup>

However, there had also been some uncertainty over whether the exhibition would be displayed in New Zealand due to financial problems experienced by the QEIIAC in 1967 (to be discussed in the next chapter). Tomory was, however, able to obtain sponsorship from *Eve* magazine and three photographic companies, Kodak New Zealand Ltd, T. A. McAlister Ltd and Agfa Gevaert New Zealand Ltd, making it an early example of the corporate sponsorship of art exhibitions in New Zealand. When Turner discovered independently that the exhibition might not come to New Zealand due to the QEIIAC’s lack of funds, he immediately sought alternative support for the tour.<sup>534</sup> Subsequently, when informed that sponsorship had already been obtained, he wrote to Tomory to ask him for the exhibition itinerary so that could write a preview for circulation to magazines and newspapers.<sup>535</sup>

---

<sup>529</sup> In 1967 Turner became the photographer for the Dominion Museum. In 1971, he was appointed as lecturer in photography at the Elam School of Fine Arts.

<sup>530</sup> Turner to Mayer, 25 July 1966, in John B. Turner, *Good Luck John! Part I: Under the Influence: Being Evidence of a Life in which Photography has Played an Important Part* (Auckland: J. Turner, 1985), 100.

<sup>531</sup> Turner to Mayer, 21 March 1967, *ibid.*, 139.

<sup>532</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>533</sup> The evidence for this comes from a letter that Turner wrote to Tomory on 14 June 1967. Turner, *Good Luck John!*, 143.

<sup>534</sup> *Ibid.* In this letter, Turner apologised to Tomory for not contacting him sooner, and described his own attempts to raise money for the exhibition.

<sup>535</sup> *Ibid.*

Overall, *The Photographer's Eye* show was positively received. In Auckland, it was described it as “an extremely popular exhibition,” with an attendance of 11,980.<sup>536</sup> In Christchurch, the RMAG annual report for that year recorded an attendance of 2,807 people and noted that it “provided considerable interest for professional and amateur photographers and the general public.”<sup>537</sup> Newspaper reviews in both cities were also favourable and recognised the importance of the exhibition. T. J. McNamara praised the show as “a remarkable survey,”<sup>538</sup> and the *Auckland Star* featured a long article on the exhibition by Robert (Bob) Hutchins, a photojournalist and the first lecturer in photography at the Elam School of Fine Arts. He described it as “the most impressive exhibition of photography to have come to New Zealand” and “a powerfully convincing reminder that photography has to be looked at in its own right and on its own terms.”<sup>539</sup> In the *Press*, the reviewer discussed some of the key features of the exhibition and concluded, “The works shown in this interesting exhibition are from the hands of men and women capable of promoting visual and aesthetic understanding of life. All who can should see them.”<sup>540</sup>

In Wellington, Turner had worked particularly hard to ensure that the show received extensive publicity. He assisted the Wellington art dealer Peter McLeavey in writing a review for the *Dominion*,<sup>541</sup> and was also able to get the picture editor at the *Evening Post* to publish a photograph from the exhibition with an extended caption.<sup>542</sup> As Turner commented in a letter to Rasmussen, the picture editor only agreed to publish it as a personal concession, having initially refused as he felt that “the exhibition was not of interest to the ‘general public’ and that his newspaper’s job was to make money – not patronise the arts or raise standards.”<sup>543</sup> Such a statement serves to emphasise the conservative attitude to art that still persisted in New Zealand. Turner also remarked to Rasmussen on the television coverage that the exhibition received:

---

<sup>536</sup> Ian Roberts, “Publicity Report for ACAG,” IC/IP I.A.1620, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>537</sup> Christchurch City Council, *Report of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery for the Year Ended 31st March, 1968* (Christchurch: 1968), 9, Folder F, Box 13, Robert McDougall Art Gallery Archive, CAG Archives. The highest attendance for that year was 3,608, for an exhibition on South African architecture. *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>538</sup> T. J. McNamara, “Photographic Show Remarkable,” *NZH*, 15 July 1967.

<sup>539</sup> Robert Hutchins, “Photography Stands Firm in Own Right,” *AS*, 20 July 1967.

<sup>540</sup> D. P., “Photographic Contrasts,” *Press*, 12 October 1967. I have not been able to ascertain who D. P. was, though it may have been the artist Don Peebles.

<sup>541</sup> Peter McLeavey, “Photographer’s Art over 100 Years,” *Dominion*, 26 August 1967.

<sup>542</sup> “Exhibition Defines Photographer’s Art,” *EP*, 2 September 1967.

<sup>543</sup> Turner to Rasmussen, 7 October 1967, IC/IP I.A.1620, MoMA Archives, NY.

although he expressed disappointment with the way the show was presented,<sup>544</sup> that the show was deemed worthy of such coverage was significant in itself. Turner also wrote to Rasmussen of his general frustration at the reception of the exhibition amongst photographers:

I have come to the sad conclusion that most New Zealand photographers, professional and amateur, are not really interested in PHOTOGRAPHY outside their often extremely narrow fields. Thus, in both circles my enthusiasm for *The Photographer's Eye* was almost totally wasted on a general tide of apathy.<sup>545</sup>

In contrast, though, he noted that “it was the ‘general public’ who seemed most impressed and interested in the exhibition.”<sup>546</sup> In my discussion with Turner he confirmed that the exhibition did not have a major impact on photographers at the time. Even so, in retrospect, he considers that *The Photographer's Eye* opened the door for people to see the potential that photography had as an art form, and noted that for him personally it was of great importance and a pivotal moment in the development of his own photographic practice.<sup>547</sup>

### International Program exhibitions and the Vietnam War

On the one hand, the impact of these MoMA shows in New Zealand was not as great as, for example, the Michener exhibition. On the other hand, it is striking that their display in New Zealand, and the expansion of MoMA's International Program to this part of the world generally, coincided with the development of the Vietnam War, in which both New Zealand and Australia were important US allies. Although it is unlikely that the International Program's decision to send exhibitions to New Zealand and Australia was directly motivated by the foreign policy needs of the US government, they nevertheless served to present the United States in a positive light at a time when this was of particular value to the US government.

---

<sup>544</sup> As Turner wrote, “Wellington TV showed about four precious (from their point of view) minutes of commentary on the show in a facetious, and from a serious photographer's point of view, pointless manner on its half hour daily TOWN AND AROUND show. The result was, I think, sloppy, ignorant, journalism.” Ibid.

<sup>545</sup> Ibid.

<sup>546</sup> Ibid.

<sup>547</sup> John B. Turner in discussion with the author, 20 June 2014. Turner recalls that his particular interest was in the quality and type of prints used, and how photographers utilised these to convey meaning.

In the first place, I have not found any evidence indicating that there was a direct relationship between the Vietnam conflict and the International Program's decision to send out exhibitions to Australia and New Zealand. Moreover, because the efforts of first John Stringer and then Peter Tomory were crucial in obtaining shows from MoMA, this contradicts the idea that they were the result of US policy decisions. However, the origins and early operations of the International Program were directly related to the Cold War and US foreign policy goals. And although Waldo Rasmussen's background was based purely around museum work (unlike his predecessor Porter McCray), as he had been employed at the International Program since 1954 he would have known of the political associations of its activities. Reflecting back, Rasmussen demonstrated that he was sensitive to the political ramifications of exhibitions circulated by the International Program with his comment regarding sending American art to Latin America: "It was a politically unwise thing to do at that time; there was so much anti-Americanism."<sup>548</sup> In addition, Rasmussen did solicit the foreign affairs mechanisms of the US government to assist in sending exhibitions to Australasia.

Unfortunately, I have not uncovered any correspondence between Rasmussen and the USIS or US embassy in New Zealand. However, there is information with regard to Australia, which demonstrates the political implications of exhibitions being sent to this part of the world, even if not New Zealand specifically. For example, on 6 October 1965 Rasmussen wrote to LeVan Roberts, the USIS public affairs officer at the US embassy in Canberra, to inform him that the *Jacques Lipchitz* and *Abstract Watercolours by 14 Americans* exhibitions were going to Australia, and to ask for assistance in touring these shows, stating, "I am sure you will agree with us in feeling that both of them will contribute considerably to American prestige in Australia."<sup>549</sup> That Roberts, as a member of the embassy, replied with an offer of help demonstrates that there was a recognition that these exhibitions would be of value to US foreign policy goals in Australia.<sup>550</sup> It also suggests that Rasmussen was happy to play on this

---

<sup>548</sup> Oral History Program, interview with Waldo Rasmussen, 1 November 1994, 28, MoMA Archives, NY. Despite this comment, the International Program did in fact tour some shows of American art to Latin America in the 1960s, such as *Abstract Drawings and Watercolors: U.S.A.* from 1962 to 1963.

<sup>549</sup> Rasmussen to Roberts, 6 October 1965, IC/IP I.A.1375, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>550</sup> Roberts to Rasmussen, 15 October 1965, *ibid.*

in order to achieve his own ends, even if his professed goal, as mentioned earlier, was to “help other communities see works of art they wouldn’t otherwise see.”

The exhibition that offers the clearest indication of a correlation between the needs of the US government in this part of the world and the operation of MoMA’s International Program is *Two Decades of American Painting*, sent to Australia in 1967. This consisted of over one hundred paintings, dating from 1945 to 1965, by thirty-five artists selected by Rasmussen. This show toured to Japan and India before it was displayed in Melbourne, from 6 June to 9 July 1967, and then Sydney, from 20 July to 13 August. It was, at this point, the largest exhibition of modern American art to have come to Australasia and, as a summation of the period in which avant-garde American painting had come to global prominence, it was a firm expression of US cultural achievement. As Rasmussen outlined in his preface to the catalogue, the aim was to provide an introduction to the most recent and advanced American art movements and developments from the period, in part because it was during this period that “American painting has become, for the first time, a major part of world culture.”<sup>551</sup> As R. L. J. Elliott explores in her thesis on the exhibition, *Two Decades of American Painting* was heavily supported by the US government across its tour.<sup>552</sup> It was presented under the joint sponsorship of MoMA and the US embassy in each country, and in each case, too, the USIS played an important role. In addition, the show was opened in Melbourne by the US consul general. Elliot’s thesis provides a comprehensive discussion of how it “acted as a form of soft power and was enmeshed in American foreign policy during the Cold War.”<sup>553</sup> However, she does not address it in relation to the war in Vietnam; I would argue that the US government entities involved must have conceived its value partly in relation to Australia’s position as an ally in that conflict.

I contend, then, that the exhibitions that MoMA sent to this part of the world during this period can be read to some degree in relation to the conflict in Vietnam and the political aims of the US government, although this connection is clearer in relation to

---

<sup>551</sup> Waldo Rasmussen, preface to *Two Decades of American Painting* (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 1967), 1.

<sup>552</sup> R. L. J. Elliott, “Two Decades of American Painting: Art, Politics and the Cold War” (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 2009).

<sup>553</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

Australia than New Zealand. The Vietnam War would also be an important factor in the types of exhibitions that MoMA sent to New Zealand and Australia in the early 1970s and in the re-establishment of the use of art by the USIS in New Zealand. This will be examined in Chapter Five; first, however, I explore New Zealand efforts to expand interactions.



## **Chapter Four: Interactions Initiated from New Zealand, 1969-1974**

Following the display of *The Photographer's Eye* there was a brief decline in institutionally-derived interactions. The Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council experienced funding issues, and the Auckland City Art Gallery began a rebuilding programme in 1968 that restricted its ability to organise and host shows. Moreover, the Museum of Modern Art also faced some restructuring issues that affected the International Program, and in 1969 the Carnegie Corporation of New York ended its individual travel grant programme for New Zealand.<sup>554</sup> However, the situation soon improved and in the period from 1969 to 1974 New Zealand institutions continued to play important roles in initiating and organising interactions with the United States. The QEIIAC remained a key source of funding for individual travel grants, the ACAG expanded its acquisitions of American art and organised shows featuring the same, and the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in New Plymouth also became involved in interactions. Also significant was an initiative to send an exhibition of New Zealand art to the United States, which represented the culmination of an idea that can be traced back to 1941 and the unsuccessful plan of the CCNY for an exhibition of New Zealand art in the United States.

### *New Zealand Contemporary Painting*

In February 1970 the exhibition *New Zealand Contemporary Painting*, comprised of thirty-six paintings by twelve artists, opened at the Arnot Art Museum in Elmira, a town in New York state. The exhibition was organised by New Zealand's Department of External Affairs, with some assistance from the QEIIAC, in conjunction with the Smithsonian Institution through its Traveling Exhibition Service. It has received very little scholarly recognition but as the first major exhibition of recent New Zealand art to tour to the United States, it is particularly significant in the context of this thesis.

After World War II, the idea of sending an exhibition of New Zealand art to the United States had been revived, at least by January 1957, when the New Zealand embassy in Washington, DC, proposed the value of such a show to the secretary of

---

<sup>554</sup> "New Zealand Council for Educational Research Newsletter," November 1969, 2, Series I D Box 5, CCNY Archives. This body received its funding from the CCNY.

the Department of External Affairs, stating, “We feel that useful publicity for New Zealand could result from such a travelling exhibit.”<sup>555</sup> Subsequently, the embassy also held discussions with the United States Information Agency on this possibility and, at the suggestion of that body, with Annemarie Pope of the SITES.<sup>556</sup> Nothing further would eventuate at this point, which is perhaps unsurprising, given that no government-sponsored exhibitions of New Zealand art had yet been toured overseas. This would soon change, although ironically, given the context of the Cold War, the first such show was an exhibition to the Soviet Union. Entitled *The Land and the People*, this travelled to the USSR in 1959, as a reciprocal initiative for *Contemporary Soviet Art* that had toured New Zealand in 1957 and 1958.<sup>557</sup> Subsequently, exhibitions of New Zealand art for display abroad were developed through the 1960s, facilitated first by the Arts Advisory Council.<sup>558</sup> This approved the assembly of two exhibitions to travel overseas, although the sponsorship was subsequently taken over by the QEIIAC. The first of these was *Contemporary New Zealand Painting and Ceramics* that was displayed in Tokyo in 1963 and then toured to Malaysia and India. It was followed by *Contemporary Painting in New Zealand* that was displayed in London in 1965. Peter Tomory played the key role in putting together this latter show, and there was some discussion about also sending it to the United States, with O. P. Gabites, the consul general in New York, proposing this to Tomory in early 1964.<sup>559</sup>

Nothing came of this immediately, but Tomory’s planned trip to the United States in September 1965 (discussed in the previous chapter) provided an opportunity to explore the idea in more depth. In relation to this, the QEIIAC’s Visual Arts Committee resolved at a meeting held on 5 August 1965 that Tomory “be supplied with background information and asked for a report” regarding the possibility of sending an exhibition of New Zealand art to the United States.<sup>560</sup> As noted in the previous chapter, Tomory met with Gabites in New York and set up meetings with Dorothy Miller and Waldo Rasmussen at MoMA, and with Robert Luck at the

---

<sup>555</sup> Counsellor G. D. L. White to the secretary for External Affairs, 8 January 1957, ACGO, 8333, W2578, 195/2/4, ANZ.

<sup>556</sup> White to the secretary of External Affairs, 13 March 1958, ACGO, 8333, W2578, 158/373/3, ANZ.

<sup>557</sup> For a discussion of this exhibition, see Wolfe, “Art in the Cold War,” 64-67.

<sup>558</sup> See Christopher Johnstone, “The First Wave: Contemporary New Zealand Art in Europe in the 1960s,” *Art New Zealand* 117 (Summer 2005-2006): 72-76.

<sup>559</sup> Gabites referred to this conversation in his letter to the secretary of External Affairs dated 27 April 1964 in which he also mentioned the Michener exhibition. MU000007\008\0005, Te Papa Archives.

<sup>560</sup> Minutes, QEIIAC VAC, 5 August 1965, 2, AANV, W3286, Box 2, ANZ.

American Federation of Arts at which the main topic was touring a New Zealand art show to the United States. However, it was not as a result of these talks that an exhibition would develop, but rather more directly through the Department of External Affairs.

This department had increasingly become involved in displays of New Zealand culture abroad through the 1960s as part of its information activities. It recognised the value of such displays, which included art exhibitions, to “the interpretation of New Zealand to the outside world.”<sup>561</sup> In relation to the United States, in 1966 the New Zealand embassy in Washington, DC, had worked with the SITES to tour an exhibition entitled *The Explorer’s New Zealand*. This was a show of forty-five watercolours, painted by Commander Richard Oliver during his 1847-51 expedition to New Zealand, and a selection of Māori artifacts from the Dominion Museum in Wellington, intended to provide “additional insight into the life and customs of the native Maori inhabitants.”<sup>562</sup> This travelled around the United States for two years and was also the catalyst for *Contemporary New Zealand Painting*. As recounted in the January 1970 edition of the *New Zealand Foreign Affairs Review*, this show had “proved so popular that the Smithsonian authorities approached the New Zealand Embassy in Washington with a request for a further selection of New Zealand work.”<sup>563</sup> The Department of External Affairs subsequently contacted the QEIIAC for support. However, as will be examined in more detail in the next section, that body was then undergoing budget problems. Thus, as recorded in minutes of a meeting of the VAC dated 8 May 1967, “it was agreed that the shortage of funds would preclude the Council taking the initiative in mounting exhibitions for overseas at the present time,” although it was also noted that the VAC would offer advice if the Department of External Affairs wished to proceed with the project.<sup>564</sup>

From this point I have little concrete information on how the exhibition developed. The QEIIAC did have some involvement, as acknowledged by the Department of

---

<sup>561</sup> “Exhibition of Contemporary New Zealand Art in the United States,” *New Zealand Foreign Affairs Review* 20, no. 1 (January 1970): 13.

<sup>562</sup> “The Explorer’s New Zealand: Suggested Press Release,” undated, Folder 3, Box 25, Record Unit 290, Smithsonian Institution, Traveling Exhibition Service, Records 1952-1981, Smithsonian Institution Archives (hereafter cited as SI Archives).

<sup>563</sup> “Exhibition of Contemporary New Zealand Art,” 14.

<sup>564</sup> Minutes, QEIIAC VAC, 8 May 1967, 4, AANV, W3286, Box 2, ANZ.

External Affairs,<sup>565</sup> although it is hard to ascertain what this was as there is no further mention of the exhibition in the minutes of the VAC. However, it was probably at least responsible for coming up with a list of artists to include in the exhibition and in contacting them, although it is likely that the works in the show were probably selected by the artists themselves. The final list of artists, who were represented in the exhibition by three paintings each, was Rita Angus, Don Binney, Melvin Day, John Drawbridge, Patrick Hanly, Ralph Hotere, Michael Illingworth, Colin McCahon, Milan Mrkusich, Don Peebles, Michael Smither and Toss Woollaston. It is unclear whether other artists were asked for contributions and declined; one artist who might fall into this category is Gordon Walters, as he was mentioned in the suggested press release. In any case, that the artists were approached directly is demonstrated by the fact that the Smithsonian Institution Archives contain a document with biographical details and artist statements, which were acknowledged as being provided by the artists.<sup>566</sup> Moreover, that the artists probably selected the works is suggested by the fact that most of these were for sale and thus were not from gallery or private collections.

The artists in the line-up represented some of the major painters working in the 1960s in New Zealand, with Gordon Walters standing out as the biggest omission. However, it was also a conventional selection, with, for example, only one woman and one Māori artist included. This meant that the opportunity to display a greater range of voices and experiences was not taken. Some brief comments will give a sense of the type of works displayed. First, there were works by three of the key artists in the development of modern art in New Zealand, Rita Angus, Toss Woollaston and Colin McCahon. Angus's three paintings, *Fish V*, *Hawke's Bay Storm* (figure 34) and *Flight* were all from 1968-69 and were among the last works that she created, as she died in January 1970. Each demonstrate her clear, hard-edged style and her interest in Cubism. For example, *Hawke's Bay Storm* is a landscape from a series of paintings of that region, consisting of shapes defined by crisp lines, the geometric shapes of the buildings contrasting with the abstract patchwork of the fields in the foreground and the curves of the hills beyond. Woollaston contributed a

---

<sup>565</sup> Department of External Affairs annual report, *AJHR*, 1969, A1, 72.

<sup>566</sup> SITES, "Contemporary Painting in New Zealand: 12 Artists," Folder 10, Box 17, Record unit 290, Smithsonian Institution, Traveling Exhibition Service, Records 1952-1981, SI Archives.

figurative work, *Sheila Buchan*, a portrait, *Gregory Lucas*, and a landscape, *Havelock*, which showcased his loose, expressionistic style and his earthy palette. Colin McCahon chose three works that demonstrated some of the different concerns of his wide-ranging practice. His *Easter Landscape: the Central Plateau*, 1968, reflected his enduring interest in the forms of the New Zealand landscape and religious symbolism, while the other two works, *Koru* and *Two*, relate to the idea of symbols as abstractions, and the different meanings that they can carry. Thus he described *Koru* in his artist's statement as "a Maori symbol with a multitude of meanings and uses in Maori art. Here, used purely as an abstract element but it can't help carrying overtones of its own background."<sup>567</sup>

Both Don Binney's and Michael Smither's paintings demonstrate a hard-edge, realist style, each typical of their practice. As he explained in his artist's statement, Binney's three paintings, from his 1968 *Pacific Frigate Bird* series (figure 35), related specifically to his recent time spent overseas:

The Frigate Birds, encountered beyond Panama Bay and over further waters towards New Zealand, appeared as an apt liaison between my time spent in Mexico and Central America and my return home. As a series of three, they connect my Mexican and my present works.<sup>568</sup>

Smither's works were all figurative, *Kirby with Dog and Car*, 1966, *Homage to Walt Disney*, 1969, and *Thomas and Piano*, and demonstrated his interest in the domestic, one of the key aspects of his oeuvre.<sup>569</sup>

Clarity of line was also a feature of Michael Illingworth's and Pat Hanly's work, although in both cases their subject-matter was rather different. With regard to their paintings in the show, I have confirmed only one small black-and-white image for each. For Illingworth, this is *The Painter and the Poet*, but the names of the other two works in the Smithsonian's list of works, *Adam and Eve 1968* and *Painting and Rainbow 9* are similar to those of other Illingworth paintings. This makes it likely that

---

<sup>567</sup> Colin McCahon, "Statement," *ibid.*

<sup>568</sup> Don Binney, "Statement," *ibid.*

<sup>569</sup> On the Smithsonian list of works, *Kirby with Dog and Car* is listed as *Portrait of Kirby Wright*; the correct title comes from Trish Gribben, *Michael Smither, Painter* (Auckland: Ron Sang Publications, 2004), 70.

these were reflective of his idiosyncratic practice that drew on mythical elements to present a social critique that challenged the conservatism and insular nature of much of New Zealand society at the time. Although I have only an image of Hanly's *Art is Love*, all three works were probably from his Molecular Aspects series that contained abstract elements that he began to develop in 1968. This assessment is derived from his artist's statement that "the paintings are based on the idea of the 'devine' [*sic*] molecular event existing in *all* things, even in the void where creation begins."<sup>570</sup> As described by Gregory O'Brien, works in this series

bring together clear, sharply drawn outlines and [create] dense molecular patterns within each shape.... While the viewer's eye focuses on the hard-edged outlines...the spaces within teem with paint blotches, specks and scuffles, the effect of which is to throw the eye into a state of unfocus.<sup>571</sup>

Melvin Day's three paintings demonstrated his concern at the time with "the significance of script or letter forms."<sup>572</sup> In contrast, John Drawbridge's *North Face Ascent*, 1964, shows the basis of much of his work in landscape in its reference to the Eiger in Switzerland. In addition, *Space Move*, 1966, highlighted his interest in surface texture; the weave of the canvas shows through in some areas and other parts appear to have been combed over, resulting in an interesting array of surface patterning. Other works selected further showcased the use of abstraction by New Zealand artists. Milan Mrkusich's works relate to two series. *Four Elements*, 1965 comes from the first phase of his Elements series; it contains "the four 'elemental' signs representing the physical and spiritual world: the active, vertical line; the passive, horizontal line; the empty circle; and the centred circle."<sup>573</sup> Based on ideas derived from medieval alchemy, it demonstrates Mrkusich's interest in the metaphysical, a theme that he also explored in the later work *Four Elements, Yellow and Dark*, 1968 (listed simply as *Yellow and Dark* by the SITES). *Theme and Counter Theme*, 1966 (figure 36), is from his Diagrams series, and exemplifies his use of the grid and the "idea that a painting could be determined by a conceptual decision to use

---

<sup>570</sup> Pat Hanly, "Statement," in "Contemporary Painting in New Zealand: 12 Artists," SI Archives.

<sup>571</sup> Gregory O'Brien, *Hanly*, (Auckland: Ron Sang Publications, 2012), 112.

<sup>572</sup> Melvin Day, "Statement," in "Contemporary Painting in New Zealand: 12 Artists," SI Archives.

<sup>573</sup> Wright and Hanfling, *Mrkusich*, 44.

an already existing system.”<sup>574</sup> Don Peebles’s three paintings were from his 1968 Canterbury series. As Justin Paton relates,

To use the formalist rhetoric of that time, these are paintings whose ‘subject’ is the lyrical pressure that fields of singing colour can exert on a rigid format, paintings in which the relation of field to edge, surface to depth, colour to colour are freighted with the utmost consideration.<sup>575</sup>

Finally, Ralph Hotere chose three of his *Black Paintings* for the exhibition, although it is unclear exactly which these were, as all the works from this series carry the same designation. This series represented an important development in his practice, the paintings characterised by “expansive and subtle modulations of black, brilliantly reflective polished surfaces, the sparing incursions of wire-thin colour or hovering elusive variations of depth.”<sup>576</sup>

The exhibition, then, gave a sense of current directions in New Zealand painting, and some of the recent concerns of a selection of important New Zealand artists. However, as it was organised by the Department of External Affairs, its primary aim was to promote New Zealand in a broader sense. This was made clear in the Department’s 1969 annual report which recorded, partially in reference to this exhibition, “Displays of this type, which add another dimension to the impressions that others have of this country, have provided useful support to the political and trade efforts of overseas posts.”<sup>577</sup> From the US perspective the exhibition was not deemed to be of major artistic importance. As a government memorandum from 19 June 1969 stated,

Judging from the attached photographs the paintings in the exhibition, while being professionally accomplished, are not as exciting in spirit as say Australia.

Yet the show does convey something of New Zealand and to an American will, I think, present a rather interesting exhibition. The interest here would lay

---

<sup>574</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>575</sup> Justin Paton, *Don Peebles: The Harmony of Opposites* (Christchurch: Hazard Press, 1996), 21.

<sup>576</sup> Vincent Sullivan, “Sketching the Artist,” in *Ralph Hotere*, Kriselle Baker and Vincent Sullivan (Auckland: Ron Sang Publications, 2008), 313.

<sup>577</sup> Department of External Affairs annual report, *AJHR*, 1969, A1, 63.

with the public as a whole and some art professionals but not our most advanced artists and critics.<sup>578</sup>

As with the New Zealand authorities, it was seen as more valuable in terms of cultural exchange, for as this memo also acknowledged, “We can not [*sic*] expect our art to be shown in New Zealand and not show theirs in America.”<sup>579</sup> The US viewpoint that New Zealand art was of only minor interest is reinforced by the places to which the SITES toured the show – primarily to community and college art galleries. While there is no comprehensive list, I have been able to identify the following venues: Cornell College, Mt Vernon, Iowa; Brooks Memorial Art Gallery, Memphis, Tennessee; Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois; Charleston Art Gallery, West Virginia; Cheekwood Museum of Art, Nashville, Tennessee; Kutztown State College, Pennsylvania, and Augustan College, Rock Island, Illinois.

It is also important to note that no catalogue was produced to accompany the show, and the only evidence that I have for how it was framed for the American audience is the suggested press release distributed by the SITES. The primary aim of this was to place the works on display within the broader context of New Zealand art, as the vast majority of potential viewers would have been unfamiliar with it. Opening with a broad introduction on the state of New Zealand painting at the time and how this represented a shift from the past, it related that the show “demonstrates a new development in New Zealand art, evincing the search for an identity of its own, discarding the traditional context of New Zealand painting.”<sup>580</sup> It then provided some historical context, offering a brief discussion of the development of New Zealand art from the later nineteenth century with a particular focus on the impact of European artists, noting the importance of Petrus van der Velden, James Nairn, Giacomo Nerli and Edwin Fristrom. It also mentioned Mina Arndt’s study with Lovis Corinth, and Flora Scales’s time in Munich under Hans Hofmann. It thus aligned New Zealand art with the European tradition before noting the importance of Angus, Woollaston and

---

<sup>578</sup> Donald McClelland to Mr. Davis, Mr. Taylor and Mrs. Van Arsdale, 19 June 1969, Folder 10, Box 17, Record unit 290, Smithsonian Institution, Traveling Exhibition Service, Records 1952-1981, SI Archives.

<sup>579</sup> Ibid.

<sup>580</sup> SITES “Contemporary Painting in New Zealand: 12 Artists: Suggested Press Release,” [1], Folder 10, Box 17, Record unit 290, Smithsonian Institution, Traveling Exhibition Service, Records 1952-1981, SI Archives.



McCahon in “[pioneering] a modern movement in painting.”<sup>581</sup> Of interest, it also stated that “neither Woollaston nor McCahon ever made prolonged visits overseas thereby evolving their style of painting solely in the context of New Zealand society.”<sup>582</sup> It thus ignored the seminal impact of McCahon’s 1958 trip to the United States, though this may have been deliberate as mentioning it may have detracted from the idea that these artists embodied a unique New Zealand identity. The document concluded by positioning the works in relation to the question of national identity, stating that “the search for a national identity is a very real endeavor for a creative artist as well as a young country, for they are both socially and artistically implicated.”<sup>583</sup> Finally, it acknowledged the growing importance of abstract work in New Zealand, mentioning especially Peebles, Mrkusich, Walters (although not represented) and Hotere.

In terms of its reception, the primary evidence that I have is from an article in the *Auckland Star*, written by a special correspondent and published on 6 November 1971, part of the way through the tour. This quoted comments from Mary-Ellen Earl, the director of the Arnot Art Gallery, that “great variety in style ... was of great interest here in Elmira” and that “we were pleased at this opportunity to see what the artists of New Zealand are doing today and to make our public aware that the visual arts are active and vital in that country.”<sup>584</sup> It also recorded comments by the director of the Tennessee Fine Arts Centre in Nashville, J. Russell MacBeth, that “visitors had shown keen interest in the paintings as ‘an insight into the life of New Zealand which you can never get as well from books or documents,’ ” and that “the exhibition reaches us in a very personal way, letting us share the creative forces of life particular to New Zealand through the experiences, ideas and expressions of these artists.”<sup>585</sup> The comments are not negative, but they are relatively conventional and add to the impression that the exhibition was primarily seen as a conduit to provide some knowledge about a country generally unfamiliar to Americans.

---

<sup>581</sup> Ibid, [2].

<sup>582</sup> Ibid.

<sup>583</sup> Ibid.

<sup>584</sup> “NZ Paintings on Tour in America,” AS, 6 November 1971.

<sup>585</sup> Ibid.

Based on the information that I have uncovered, *Contemporary New Zealand Painting* had a very limited impact both in terms of promoting understanding of New Zealand generally and in relation to its art. A key reason for this was that the show was not displayed in major centres. In addition, there seems to have been little sense given of the range of contexts that the artworks were a part of, nor was information provided on how the artists in the exhibition had developed their own styles and interpreted and adapted overseas trends in relation to their particular concerns and circumstances. One wonders whether, if Tomory's negotiations with MoMA had borne fruit, this would have led to an exhibition featuring a wider range of New Zealand art with a greater focus on its art historical contexts and a tour that encompassed a more impressive range of venues.

### **The Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council**

As noted, the QEIIAC suffered budget cuts in 1967, and this affected both its available funds and its ability to plan ahead.<sup>586</sup> These problems contributed to a shift in the QEIIAC's policy towards exhibitions, which was also related to the end of Peter Tomory's tenure as exhibitions officer following the appointment, in June 1967, of an assistant to the director of the QEIIAC tasked with a visual arts focus. The appointee was Gordon White, formerly director of the Southland Museum and Art Gallery in Invercargill, who took up his duties in September 1967. The loss of Tomory's contacts and experience was a blow,<sup>587</sup> and the funding cuts meant that the QEIIAC decided to switch its attention to creating shows from sources within New Zealand, rather than bringing in exhibitions from overseas.<sup>588</sup> In the longer term the QEIIAC would take steps to resume a more prominent role in exhibitions, forming a sub-committee in 1970, initially made up of the gallery directors of the four principal art galleries, to coordinate exhibitions coming into New Zealand.<sup>589</sup> However, it would no longer be involved in obtaining exhibitions itself, and its most important contribution would be providing subsidies for shows brought in by the art galleries. It

---

<sup>586</sup> For a summary of the financial difficulties experienced by the QEIIAC from 1967 to 1969 see QEIIAC annual report, *AJHR*, 1969, H42, 6-7.

<sup>587</sup> Tomory would take up a position at Columbia University in New York in 1968.

<sup>588</sup> "Unfamiliar Art on Display," *NZH*, 31 July 1968.

<sup>589</sup> QEIIAC annual report, *AJHR*, 1970, H42, 7.

also continued to be an important source of funds for New Zealanders looking to travel overseas.

### Individual interactions

It is hard to ascertain exactly how many visual arts grantees went to the United States in the period 1969 to 1974 as the QEIIAC's reports do not always provide destination information. However, the 1970 report records that the potter, ceramicist and arts educator Doreen Blumhardt was given a grant "to study collections of oriental ceramics in South-east Asia, Europe and the US," and that Michael Eaton was furnished with funds "to further his work as a painter and in the training of secondary school art teachers by travel and study in Britain and the United States."<sup>590</sup> Then in 1971 artist and educator Ray Thorburn received a grant which allowed him to travel to Brazil to attend the eleventh Bienal de São Paulo as one of the artists selected to represent New Zealand,<sup>591</sup> and then to Europe and the United States, with "the intention of studying Trends in Contemporary Art and developments in art education."<sup>592</sup> In the United States, he travelled to New York, Washington, DC and Los Angeles, visiting art museums and art schools, and meeting with a range of artists, including Len Lye, Jasper Johns, Frank Stella and Donald Judd, as well as Clement Greenberg.<sup>593</sup> Thorburn valued his time overseas, writing in his report to the QEIIAC that "all my objectives were achieved far more successfully than I ever hoped."<sup>594</sup> On his return Thorburn approached the National Art Gallery about bringing a Lye exhibition to New Zealand, and its indifference to this idea prompted Thorburn to turn to the GBAG under Robert Ballard. This led to the development of a long-term relationship between Lye and that institution,<sup>595</sup> arguably leading to the development of a dedicated Len Lye centre, due to open in mid-2015.

---

<sup>590</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>591</sup> The other artist selected was Ralph Hotere, although he did not attend the event. This was the first time that New Zealand had entered the Bienal de São Paulo.

<sup>592</sup> Ray Thorburn, "Report of Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council Senior Travel Fellowship 1971," 12 January 1972, 1, Ray Thorburn Artist File, Folder 1, Biographical articles, AAG Archives.

<sup>593</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>594</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>595</sup> Roger Horrocks, *Len Lye*, 355-59.

However, it is notable that Thorburn did not believe the trip had a major impact on him artistically. As he stated in his report, “I have gained in confidence and feel a great desire to paint full time for a period to realise the ideas that have matured since I have been away,”<sup>596</sup> but he also recorded that “this does not mean I intend to change my style (my modular concept has been praised overseas) but will refine the image.”<sup>597</sup> In other words, Thorburn’s experience of art in other countries did not lead to a radical change in his practice, in part because by this stage information about developments in art was increasingly accessible and spread more quickly through a variety of media. More broadly, although individual trips were still of great value, they were also becoming more commonplace as travel continued to become cheaper and easier. This meant that their wider impacts were more diluted, and they did not have the same repercussions that, for example, Colin McCahon’s 1958 visit, or John Coley’s 1964 visit had had.

### **The Auckland City Art Gallery**

When Gil Docking took over as the director of the ACAG in May 1965, he had quickly become concerned with the physical state of the ACAG building and remedying this became one of his main aims.<sup>598</sup> At the same time, Docking continued the ACAG’s international outlook, which included interactions with the United States. In the period through to 1968, the ACAG hosted and toured the exhibitions sent out by MoMA, and also brought to New Zealand the exhibition *Marcel Duchamp 78 Works: The Mary Sisler Collection (1904–1963)* from an American collector in 1967. This was a major exhibition, the impact of which have been explored in depth by Marcus T. G. Moore.<sup>599</sup> The following year, Docking purchased a portfolio of ten screenprints by Jim Dine entitled *A Tool Box*, 1966 (figure 38), which was the gallery’s first acquisition of American art since 1962. As Docking reported to the

---

<sup>596</sup> Thorburn, “Report of Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council Senior Travel Fellowship 1971,” 3.

<sup>597</sup> Ibid.

<sup>598</sup> Gil Docking in discussion with the author, 10 October 2013.

<sup>599</sup> Marcus T. G. Moore, “Marcel Duchamp and New Zealand Art, 1965 – 2007 by Means of Duchamp’s Peripheral Vision: Case Studies in a History of Reception” (PhD thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2012). In particular, Moore links the exhibition to the development of Post-Object art in New Zealand, and argues that “because Duchamp enjoyed renewed attention in the 1960s around the world, there is not the temporal lag that is assumed to deny New Zealand participation in global culture.” Ibid., 35-36.

deputy town clerk in recommending the purchase to the Parks and Library Committee:

American printmaking is at present represented in the collection only by a group of three prints acquired in 1962. Since that time printmaking has undergone vast and extremely significant changes not the least in terms of technique. Jim Dine's toolbox is very representative of these as well as being an important work by a major contemporary American.<sup>600</sup>

Subsequently, the refurbishment of the gallery began in 1968, utilising funds from the Auckland City Council and the Edmiston Bequest,<sup>601</sup> and the first phase was completed in 1971. This restricted the ACAG's ability to host exhibitions in this period, as the staff and the collections relocated to the Town Hall, and only the mezzanine floor of the gallery and the coffee shop were open to the public during reconstruction. In 1969, the ACAG thus had a reduced programme of only five exhibitions, but notably one of these was of American art. This was the exhibition *Banners from New York* which was the ACAG's contribution to that year's Auckland Festival. The ACAG sourced this from Multiples Gallery, a private gallery in New York, and subsequently toured it to the NAG, Robert MacDougall Art Gallery and the Dunedin Public Art Gallery. The exhibition consisted of eighteen banners with images designed by eighteen artists based in New York, including Jim Dine, Helen Frankenthaler, Robert Indiana, Roy Lichtenstein, Marisol, Andy Warhol and Tom Wesselmann. The screen-printed banners had been produced in editions of twenty and the majority were in a large format, over 1.5 metres high. As Hamish Keith noted in a letter to Melvin Day, the recently appointed director of the NAG, this type of exhibition was "one way to keep in touch with the current American scene, and it is more economic than mounting a major show of American painting."<sup>602</sup> Indeed, it was the first chance for people in New Zealand to see examples of American Pop art by some of the key artists within that movement.

---

<sup>600</sup> Docking to J. Shaw, 11 March 1968, Minutes, ACC PLC, 19 March 1968, Attachment AA, Minute Book 1968, ACC 109, Item 11, AC Archives.

<sup>601</sup> For details on this bequest see "New Plans for the City Art Gallery," *Auckland City Art Gallery Quarterly* 37, 1967, 7.

<sup>602</sup> Keith to Day, 30 October 1968, MU000007\009\0016, Te Papa Archives. In this letter, Keith also mentioned that it was the Gallery's intention to arrange a show of American painting in the next two to three years.

At this point, as the redevelopment of the gallery building progressed, the ACAG staff looked to re-expand the gallery's exhibitions programme. For example, in mid-1969, both Hamish Keith and Docking wrote to John Stringer at the National Gallery of Victoria requesting information on upcoming shows planned for Australia that the ACAG, and New Zealand, might be able to host.<sup>603</sup> Keith also wrote to Richard Palmer, the administrative director of the Department of Circulating Exhibitions at MoMA, although he would receive no reply from this enquiry.<sup>604</sup> Subsequently, however, an important relationship would develop between the ACAG and MoMA. This will be explored in the next chapter but it is worth noting here that the ACAG's installation of proper air conditioning and climate control was a necessary factor in this. Then in January and February 1970, David Armitage, the ACAG exhibitions officer, visited Australia, partly with the aim of sourcing shows.<sup>605</sup> Most significantly, during his time in Sydney, the curator of the Art Gallery of New South Wales suggested that Armitage contact the André Emmerich Gallery in New York to put together a loan exhibition of Morris Louis works.<sup>606</sup> In his report to the ACC, Armitage endorsed this idea, as did Docking, and the ACAG entered into successful negotiations with Emmerich.<sup>607</sup> This would lead to the first solo exhibition by a modernist American artist at the ACAG. Prior to that exhibition coming to fruition, Docking organised a show of paintings from around the Pacific that contained a significant proportion of work from the US West Coast and Hawaii, entitled the *Pacific Cities Loan Exhibition*.

### *Pacific Cities Loan Exhibition*

This exhibition marked the official opening of the ACAG's new Edmiston wing in April 1971. It consisted of seventy works from nine cities that bordered the Pacific – Honolulu, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, Vancouver, Tokyo, Manila, Brisbane

---

<sup>603</sup> Keith to Stringer, 25 July 1969; Docking to Stringer, 21 August 1969. Exhibitions Officer 1969 Box, National Gallery of Victoria Archives.

<sup>604</sup> Keith to Palmer, 26 August 1969, IC/IP I.A.1937, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>605</sup> Other aims were for Armitage to familiarise himself with the exhibition *Art of the Space Age* and to undertake a week's study at the NGV. Docking to the town clerk, 5 March 1970, "Report of Visit to Australia (January 24-February 15, 1970)," 1, Minutes, ACC PLC, 17 March 1970, Attachment AA, Minute Book 1970, ACC 109, Item 13, AC Archives.

<sup>606</sup> Emmerich had been Louis's dealer during the last few years of the artist's life and had been looking after his paintings for the Estate since his death in 1962.

<sup>607</sup> The AAG Archives do not contain any correspondence between the ACAG and Emmerich detailing the negotiations relating to this show.

and Newcastle. The exhibition was a reflection of Docking's interest in the Pacific region and his conception of New Zealand as a Pacific nation. Docking expressed this in the catalogue, where he also explicitly positioned the show as a successor to the 1961 exhibition *Painting from the Pacific*:

It is ten years since the City Art Gallery presented an exhibition called *Painting from the Pacific*. During the past decade Auckland has become increasingly aware of the need for more active cultural and trade links with cities sharing the great and beautiful Pacific Ocean. This is the Ocean which physically unites us; and, as the name *Pacific* implies, this Ocean can and should be a means of peaceful inter-communication between all the cities and nations sharing its waters.<sup>608</sup>

As with *Painting from the Pacific*, the selection of artworks was the responsibility of each contributing institution, each representing a city. Unlike that show, however, New Zealand painting was not included. Nor was it designed with a specific thesis in mind, that there was some kind of link between the art of regions bordering the Pacific. As Docking also wrote, probably with Peter Tomory's premise for *Painting from the Pacific* in mind, "it would be unwise to draw conclusions from this exhibition relating to regional styles and tendencies. Our main objective has not been to make judgements but to congregate and to communicate."<sup>609</sup>

There were twenty-eight paintings from the United States: the Honolulu Academy of Arts sent six, the Fine Arts Gallery of San Diego nine, and there were three from the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum in San Francisco, and ten from the Henry Art Gallery at the University of Washington, Seattle. While I have not been able to locate images of all the works, I have found enough to suggest that there was nothing particularly radical about the American selections, although together they were an eclectic mix. This extended to the contributions from other cities, and this probably explains why the exhibition as a whole was not well received in Auckland, with only four thousand people visiting it out of the 30,504 who came in to the gallery in the period that it was on display.<sup>610</sup> Critics were also dismissive of it. The headline of

---

<sup>608</sup> Gil Docking, foreword to *Pacific Cities Loan Exhibition*, by Auckland City Art Gallery (Auckland: Auckland City Art Gallery, 1971), [5].

<sup>609</sup> Ibid.

<sup>610</sup> L. C. Lloyd, acting director, to the town clerk, 4 June 1971, Minutes, ACC PLC, 15 June 1971, Attachment AA, Minute Book 1971, ACC 109, Item 14, AC Archives.

Hamish Keith's review was "Round the Pacific with a Yawn," and in this he compared the exhibition unfavourably with *Painting from the Pacific*.<sup>611</sup> He called the show "about as bold, big and exciting as cold rice pudding," further stating that "the overall impression in the two galleries is one of dull, pedestrian competence. There is no air, no life, nothing left open or expanding and nothing that sings."<sup>612</sup> Similarly, the *New Zealand Herald* reported a letter sent to the editor by ten Elam students that decried the standard of the selections, although they also argued that the blame for this did not lie with the ACAG but rather with the contributing cities, stating that "their response to Auckland's venture can only be considered at best a very half-hearted reply."<sup>613</sup> The article also reported the comment by the *Herald's* art critic, T. J. McNamara, that the exhibition was "interesting but not exciting and of no use to young art students."<sup>614</sup>

### Morris Louis

The *Pacific Cities Loan Exhibition* was soon followed by the solo show of Morris Louis paintings, which opened in October 1971. Although this too would not be well-attended, it received a far better critical reaction and also impacted upon several artists. The exhibition consisted of eleven works, nine lent by the André Emmerich Gallery, and two from a private collection. Together they represented three of Louis's most important series: the Veils, Unfurleds and Stripes. The exhibition was the first organised by the ACAG to tour internationally. It was displayed first at the Honolulu Academy of Arts from 30 April to 30 May 1971, then at the NGV from 8 July to 31 August, after which it came to Auckland from 12 October to 28 November. Finally it went to the Santa Barbara Museum of Art in California, where it was shown from 8 January to 6 February 1972. The paintings lent by Emmerich were for sale, ranging in price from US\$40,000 to US\$65,000, with four specified for sale to museums only.<sup>615</sup>

---

<sup>611</sup> By this stage, Keith had left his position at the ACAG.

<sup>612</sup> Hamish Keith, "Round the Pacific with a Yawn," *Weekender's Art News and Reviews*, AS, 1 May 1971.

<sup>613</sup> "Pacific Cities Art Exhibition Draws Criticism," *NZH*, 12 May 1971.

<sup>614</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>615</sup> Martha Baer to Docking, 6 March 1971, Exhibitions Officer 1971 Box, National Gallery of Victoria Archives. As Edward Hanfling records, the Honolulu Academy of Arts acquired one of the Veils and the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased the largest Unfurled in the show, *Beta Nu* in 1972. Hanfling also notes that the ACAG declined to purchase *Umbria* (one of the Veils), despite the efforts of Petar Vuletic in negotiating a reasonable price with the artist's widow and Emmerich.



The ACAG also produced a catalogue with an introduction by the important American art critic, Rosalind Krauss. In this, she focused primarily on the Veils series, discussing discussed Louis's technique and how and why these works were successful, and ended with some consideration of the Unfurleds.<sup>616</sup> Because there were only eleven works in the exhibition, this meant that they could be well-spaced out within the gallery, thus giving viewers the opportunity to engage fully with each painting (figures 37-38). Wystan Curnow, who had recently returned from the United States and was lecturing English at the University of Auckland, opened the exhibition in Auckland. This also featured some recollections by Sybil Meyersburg, an American who had been a pupil of Louis, and who flew to Auckland from Tahiti at the suggestion of Louis's widow.<sup>617</sup>

The three critics that wrote on the show were enthusiastic and recognised its significance. T. J. McNamara offered some biographical information on Louis and described his technique, before considering the works in general terms, concluding that "each is a very beautiful object with a unique presence. We must admire the man who could conceive this visual experience on this scale and carry it through without any loss of intensity."<sup>618</sup> Hamish Keith compared Louis's work to theatre and described the Unfurleds as "by far the most exciting works the gallery has yet exhibited for scale and impact."<sup>619</sup> He argued that they had the power to open up new ways to view the world and concluded, "Overall, these 'works' are a compelling and enriching experience and one not to be missed."<sup>620</sup> Finally, Wystan Curnow contributed a retrospective article to *Arts and Community* that was informed by his recent time in the United States where he had experienced modern American art first-hand.<sup>621</sup> He began by asserting the belief that art produced in the United States in recent times was at the forefront of modern developments:

---

Edward Hanfling, "Morris Louis in Australia and New Zealand," *The Burlington Magazine* 151, no. 1281, (December 2009): 830, 832. This was probably due to lack of funds.

<sup>616</sup> Rosalind Krauss, introduction to *Morris Louis*, by Auckland City Art Gallery (Auckland: Auckland City Art Gallery, 1971), [4-6].

<sup>617</sup> Wystan Curnow, "Morris Louis at the Auckland City Art Gallery," *Arts and Community* 7, no. 12, (December 1971): 12.

<sup>618</sup> T. J. McNamara, "Painting Display Offers Vast Fields of Colour," *NZH*, 13 October 1971.

<sup>619</sup> Hamish Keith, "New Way of Seeing," *Weekender's Art News and Reviews*, AS, 16 October 1971.

<sup>620</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>621</sup> See Leonard, "Curnow's Leverage," 1-2.

I don't believe that I can exaggerate the value of the Morris Louis exhibition that has just ended at the Auckland City Gallery. It is the first one-man show of a major modern American artist to reach our shores. For 30 years now, the best painting in the world has been American. Which means that we had in Auckland, for the first time, 11 of the most important paintings to have been made since World War II.<sup>622</sup>

He also recognised that viewers of the works might not have appreciated what they had seen, and therefore introduced his article with a defence of abstract art in general, and Louis in particular, which Curnow clearly felt was still necessary in New Zealand in 1971. He discussed how Louis's work developed and its broader meaning, drawing on Michael Fried's *Artforum* essay from February 1967 entitled "The Achievement of Morris Louis." He then focused on the works in the exhibition, discussing the key features of each of the series represented. Like Keith, he believed that the Unfurleds represented the strongest paintings: "These are the great works, more than any other they articulate the act of the creation of colour out of nothingness with a beauty and finality that is overpowering."<sup>623</sup> He was happy to admit, however, that he did not yet quite understand the Stripes, but stated "they are moving and do seem to break new ground for Louis."<sup>624</sup>

The tone of Curnow's piece was particularly understandable given that the public response was limited and the show not well-attended. The evidence for this comes from a 1974 memorandum from Peter Webb (who succeeded David Armitage as exhibitions officer) to the town clerk on a proposed exhibition of work by the American artist Paul Jenkins.<sup>625</sup> Webb was arguing against this proposal and as part of this he mentioned the reception of the Morris Louis show:

The recent Morris Louis exhibition was an aesthetic success, indeed a coup for Auckland, but in every other respect it was a total failure. It cost the city in excess of \$13,000 and drew an audience of only a few hundred inspite [*sic*] of good reviews. Louis is a forerunner of contemporary American painting, and for this reason, it might be argued that his exhibition was justified.<sup>626</sup>

---

<sup>622</sup> Curnow, "Morris Louis," 12.

<sup>623</sup> Ibid.

<sup>624</sup> Ibid.

<sup>625</sup> Webb to G. O. Sims, ACC town clerk, "Proposed Paul Jenkins Exhibition," 30 January 1974, Art Gallery Exhibitions 1972-1974, ACC 275, Item 72-116 Part 1, AC Archives.

<sup>626</sup> Ibid.

There was, at least, a positive artistic response, as detailed by Edward Hanfling in a 2009 article for *The Burlington Magazine*. For example, he observes that Milan Mrkusich's paintings of 1971-72 "took on more atmospheric surfaces as a result of using diluted acrylics and unprimed canvas," suggesting the impact of Louis's work.<sup>627</sup> However, to Hanfling, Louis's paintings had the biggest effect on Ian Scott, an artist whom he notes already had an interest in Louis's work prior to the 1971 exhibition, having painted a work entitled *Homage to Morris Louis* in 1969. Subsequently, from 1973 to 1975 he produced his Sprayed Stripes series "in which colours applied directly with commercial spray cans were floated against an expanse of white or sometimes unprimed canvas."<sup>628</sup>

Yet another artist on whom the exhibition had an effect (although not discussed by Hanfling) was Gretchen Albrecht. As she relayed to me, this was the first time that she had experienced that kind of art, and she was struck by the scale of the paintings.<sup>629</sup> They displayed what she described as "an expansiveness," although she also recognised the importance of their deliberate structure. In the late 1960s Albrecht was moving more towards abstractionist landscapes, and at the time of the exhibition she was working on a series of garden paintings and gradually loosening up her technique. She described the exhibition as helping to push her in a direction in which she was already heading, towards the employment of broader swathes of colour and greater abstraction, and was particularly interested in the Veils, with their sheets of colour. As with the Michener exhibition, these responses demonstrate that exhibitions of contemporary art, and especially those from the United States, often had a greater and more profound impact on artists than on the general public.

### Acquisitions of American art

The refurbishment of the ACAG can also be linked to a new attitude to acquisitions. In a report to the town clerk from May 1970 entitled "Some Deficiencies in the Auckland City Art Gallery Collections," Docking emphasised the importance and

---

<sup>627</sup> Hanfling, "Morris Louis in Australia and New Zealand," 835.

<sup>628</sup> Ibid. Hanfling also discusses how Scott would return to some of the ideas opened up by Louis, particularly his use of space, in his Models series from the 2000s.

<sup>629</sup> Gretchen Albrecht in discussion with the author, 20 February 2014. This is the source for the information that follows.

impact of the redevelopment, and noted that “a major city gallery needs adequate purchasing funds to build up a first-class collection of art works for the use, enjoyment and education of its citizens.”<sup>630</sup> Docking then pointed out some of the main shortcomings of the collection, stating in particular that “a feature of the collection which is most disturbing is that although Auckland is becoming a great Pacific city, we have virtually no collections of works from countries bordering the Pacific or from the Oriental and South Asian cultures.”<sup>631</sup> This corresponds to the idea, argued in this thesis that, since World War II, New Zealand’s attention had increasingly shifted away from its colonial roots towards the Pacific region. Docking viewed the United States as part of this, and provided a table that demonstrated the gallery’s lack of artwork from these regions. As he further argued,

With our economic and cultural future being directed more towards the Pacific Basin and less towards the United Kingdom, we need to commence collecting works from these countries. They are our neighbours. We need to understand their life and history and this can be materially assisted by holding and displaying some good examples of art works from these countries.<sup>632</sup>

To this end, he suggested that a sum of \$50,000 for acquisitions was necessary. However, that he was not expecting this amount immediately is demonstrated by his recommendation in the Budget Draft Estimates for 1970/71 that the fund for acquisitions be increased from \$10,000 to \$15,000. The Parks and Library Committee agreed to this but, despite subsequent efforts from Docking, there would be no further increases to this amount for purchasing artworks during his tenure.<sup>633</sup> Nevertheless, the extra funds that were now available had a positive impact on acquisitions of American art.

---

<sup>630</sup> “Some Deficiencies in the Auckland City Art Gallery Collections,” Docking to the town clerk, 5 May 1970, 1, Minutes, ACC PLC, 12 May 1970, Attachment AA, Minute Book 1970, ACC 109, Item 13, AC Archives.

<sup>631</sup> Ibid.

<sup>632</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>633</sup> In April 1971 Docking wrote another report for the PLC, entitled “Necessity for Increased Purchasing Funds for the City of Auckland Art Gallery” that recommended \$40,000 be budgeted for purchases. The PLC resolved “that a figure as calculated by the Director be placed in the estimates for 1971/72 as a purchasing fund.” Minutes, ACC PLC, 20 April 1971, 4, Minute Book 1971, ACC 109, Item 14, AC Archives. Docking therefore allocated \$40,000 for this purpose in the Gallery’s draft budget estimates for 1971/72. Docking to the town clerk, 4 May 1971, 2, Minutes, ACC PLC, 18 May 1971, Attachment AA, *ibid.* However, this was not approved as the ACAG’s budget report for the period ended 2 February 1972 listed the annual estimate for the picture purchase fund as still \$15,000. Minutes, Social Welfare and Cultural Activities Committee, 25 February 1972, Attachment AB, Minute Book 1972, ACC 172, Item 1, AC Archives.

First, in 1970, the ACAG purchased Robert Indiana's *Love* banner (figure 39) that had been displayed in the *Banners from New York* exhibition.<sup>634</sup> The cost of this was \$635, a sizeable amount when one considers that few works purchased at this time cost more than \$500. Soon after, Docking wrote a letter to Robert Motherwell and Helen Frankenthaler (then married, although they divorced the following year), to ask whether they had any paintings or studies that they could offer for purchase by the gallery, noting that it was "woefully short of examples of American painting" and that "many of our young painters and a significant section of the Auckland public are keenly interested in the work of American painters."<sup>635</sup> Docking subsequently entered into negotiations directly with Frankenthaler's dealer André Emmerich, and purchased the work *Black Came In*, 1965-66 (figure 40). The painting, which arrived on 28 October 1970, cost NZ\$5,000.<sup>636</sup> This made it one of the most expensive paintings bought by the ACAG up to that point. Named for the strip of black on the upper left, *Black Came In* is a tall, narrow work, measuring 175.2 x 71.1cm. It is a purely abstract piece in acrylic; Frankenthaler had switched to this medium from oil in the early 1960s in order to explore its possibilities, which created a different effect when staining.<sup>637</sup> In this work, she stained the canvas first in a luminous turquoise, then added other areas of colour on top, confined to three edges, leaving the centre and top dominated by turquoise. The painting is evidence of how Frankenthaler's work was becoming simplified, with a greater focus on colour, making it more akin to the Colour Field tendency in abstract art. Soon after its arrival, *Black Came In* was hung next to Karl Kasten's *Fragment of Autumn* (the US West Coast work donated to the ACAG by Colin McCahon in 1958) as part of a display of the ACAG's collection of twentieth-century international works.<sup>638</sup>

It is significant that Docking decided to spend a substantial part of the gallery's acquisitions budget on an example of modern American painting. It demonstrated a genuine effort to update the ACAG's collection and provide an example of recent art

---

<sup>634</sup> Docking to the town clerk, 2 June 1970, Minutes, ACC PLC, 9 June 1970, Attachment AA, Minute Book 1970, ACC 109, Item 13, AC Archives.

<sup>635</sup> Docking to Motherwell and Frankenthaler, 12 June 1970, Information Files, HS 04/68, AAG Archives.

<sup>636</sup> "Painting for Gallery an Abstract," *NZH*, 29 October 1970.

<sup>637</sup> Barbara Rose, *Frankenthaler* (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1979), 92.

<sup>638</sup> Hamish Keith, "Respectable Now," *Weekender's Art News and Reviews*, *AS*, 21 November 1970. Other works shown here were Jim Dine's *Tool Box* series and Barbara Hepworth's *Torso II*. "Painting for Gallery an Abstract."

from the country where many of the most important developments in art since World War II had occurred. It also acts as a concrete demonstration of how continuing interchange with the United States had helped develop the awareness of that country's role in contemporary art, and the shift in focus away from Europe. Docking's interest in purchasing American works is further evidenced by a letter to John Stringer, the former exhibitions officer at the NGV who had recently taken up the position of assistant director of the International Program at MoMA, in which Docking asked him if he would offer advice on acquisitions.<sup>639</sup> Stringer agreed to this,<sup>640</sup> and Docking subsequently sought his help to acquire a sculpture by an American artist to display in the ACAG's new outdoor sculpture garden.<sup>641</sup> But nothing would develop from this, probably due to fact that the acquisitions budget was not increased.

Docking did, however, make one other major purchase related to American art prior to his departure from the ACAG in March 1972. This was a work by Hans Hofmann, an artist born in Germany who had a major influence on a number of artists in the United States, particularly those related to Abstract Expressionism, through the various schools of art that he set up there. The painting, entitled *Landscape* and dated 1935, shows a view of Provincetown, Massachusetts, where Hofmann held one of his summer schools. The work cost NZ\$5,700 and, like the Frankenthaler work, it was bought from the André Emmerich Gallery. Eric Young, curator of paintings and sculpture at the ACAG at the time, described it as "a transitional work, all the more interesting in that it evokes both the sources of Hofmann's inspiration and the later expressionist work for which he is renowned."<sup>642</sup> Notably, there was a link between Hofmann and New Zealand, and especially one of this country's most important artists, Toss Woollaston. In brief, a New Zealand artist, Flora Scales from Christchurch, had studied at Hofmann's school of art in Munich over the winter of 1931-32, and brought back with her extensive notes on Hofmann's ideas about modern art when she returned in 1934. A young Toss Woollaston copied these, and sought to apply Hofmann's principles to his own painting. This connection was mentioned by Young in the ACAG *Quarterly* and Docking himself also discussed the

---

<sup>639</sup> Docking to Stringer, 8 July 1970, Information Files, HS 04/68, AAG Archives.

<sup>640</sup> Stringer to Docking, 13 July 1970, *ibid*.

<sup>641</sup> Docking to Stringer, 14 August 1970, *ibid*.

<sup>642</sup> Eric Young, "Hans Hofmann: An Early Provincetown Landscape," *Quarterly of the Auckland City Art Gallery* 52, 1972, 4.

impact of Hofmann's work on Woollaston, stating that "for this reason, quite apart from anything else, it is important that Hofmann should be represented in our gallery."<sup>643</sup>

Although the ACAG certainly improved its holdings of American art under Docking, the acquisitions were limited, though it is likely that further purchases would have been made had more funds been granted by the ACC. Nonetheless it is noteworthy that two of the three most expensive works bought by Docking were related to American art, the Hofmann and the Frankenthaler; only *A Calvary Battle*, by the seventeenth-century Italian artist, Salvator Rosa, cost more.<sup>644</sup> Hofmann's *Landscape* offered a sense of the relationship of New Zealand art to international developments, and the Frankenthaler, along with the purchases of Jim Dine's *Tool Box* series and Robert Indiana's *Love* banner, represented an effort to incorporate into the ACAG's collection examples of recent, and important, movements in American art.

#### The Auckland City Art Gallery after Docking

Shortly after the *Morris Louis* exhibition, Gil Docking resigned as director of the ACAG. He left in March 1972 and his replacement, Richard Hirsch, the former curator of the Michener Collection, arrived the following month. One of the reasons for Hirsch's appointment was his network of international contacts and, as he was an American, his tenure promised a continuing increase in interactions with the United States. However, Hirsch's time at the ACAG proved to be short and contentious; he resigned in December 1973 due to conflict with some of the gallery staff. As a result, various ideas and plans that he had tried to initiate did not come to fruition. However, the relationship with MoMA's International Program that had developed under Docking was sustained, and Peter Webb, the exhibitions officer, also secured loans from US art museums for two important exhibitions, although not of American art,

---

<sup>643</sup> "Gallery Buys Work by Influential U.S. Artist," *NZH*, 27 February 1972. Docking commented here, "We would like some of his later abstract work as well, but they are fetching in the region of \$50,000 in New York, which puts them outside our range."

<sup>644</sup> This cost NZ\$16,100, with \$4,300 coming from the National Art Collections Fund in London. "City Buys Painting for \$16,100," *NZH*, 2 September 1970.

*John Constable: The Natural Painter*, displayed from September 1973 to January 1974 and *17th Century Pastoral Holland*, displayed in February 1974.

Hirsch's resignation was intended to come into effect in June 1974 but in January of that year he was hospitalised with serious injuries after a fall from his third-storey apartment. As a result, the town clerk, G. O. Sims, took over administration of the gallery until a new director could be found, but conflict continued.<sup>645</sup> Subsequently, Ernest Smith, an Australian who was previously director of Dalhousie Art Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia, was appointed to the position, which he took up in August 1974, and he was able to come to a better understanding with staff. Despite these upheavals, the gallery managed to add considerably to its holdings of American art in 1974, purchasing fifteen prints by either US-based or US-born artists, largely through the efforts of Anne Kirker, the first curator of prints and drawings at the gallery. These were displayed at the end of that year in an exhibition entitled *Recent Prints from Britain and the United States* that also included loans of works by such artists as Andy Warhol.

### **The Govett-Brewster Art Gallery**

Alongside the ACAG, the GBAG was the other New Zealand art gallery that played a major role in hosting, bringing in, and touring exhibitions from the United States in the early 1970s. In addition, it also purchased several works by American artists. There were two main reasons behind this. First, the inaugural director of the GBAG, John Maynard, initiated a progressive collections and exhibitions policy. Second, his successor, Robert Ballard, who took over in January 1971, was a Californian who facilitated purchases of American art, and used his contacts to bring several exhibitions from the United States, the most notable of which was *The State of California Painting*.

The beginnings of the GBAG can be traced to 1962, when a local New Plymouth woman, Monica Brewster (née Govett), gave £50,000 by trust deed to that city to establish a public art gallery. As a result, the New Plymouth City Council set up the

---

<sup>645</sup> See, for example, "Art Gallery Embroiled in Dispute," *NZH*, 10 August 1974.



Govett-Brewster Art Gallery Establishment Committee in 1963 and purchased a former cinema building for conversion. In 1966 this committee appointed Australian John Maynard as the gallery's first director. Maynard was a twenty-three-year-old art teacher with the Victoria Education Department in Melbourne who had no art gallery or museum experience, although the committee paid for him to spend four months at the AGNSW and the NGV to gain experience before his appointment.<sup>646</sup> Yet he was able to develop, and forcefully promote, a clear vision for the gallery that would arguably make it the most progressive in the country in the early 1970s. Maynard proposed a collections policy that was different from most other art galleries in the country, and was able to gain the support of the gallery committee. Two of the central aspects of this, adopted by the committee in April 1968, were:

- 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.
- That an emphasis be placed on the acquisition of contemporary works of art executed by New Zealand artists.<sup>647</sup>

According to McCredie,

Maynard's rationale for the inclusion of Pacific Rim countries was that art from these countries had already influenced New Zealand artists and NZ [*sic*] was likely to become increasingly associated – economically, culturally, and militarily, with them.<sup>648</sup>

This desire to focus on recent art from countries in and around the Pacific was similar to that expressed by Gil Docking in relation to acquisitions at the ACAG.

Maynard also wanted the GBAG to have a challenging programme of temporary exhibitions, to which the GBAG committee also assented. As E. P. Allen, chairman of the committee, explained in a letter from October 1970 that defended the policies of the gallery in the face of criticism from the press and the Taranaki Society of Arts:

---

<sup>646</sup> See Athol McCredie, "Going Public: New Zealand Art Museums in the 1970s," (1999; repr., master's thesis, Massey University, 2006), 193.

<sup>647</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>648</sup> *Ibid.*, 195n20.

We reiterate that it is the policy of the Gallery committee to present as wide a range of art in all its forms as is compatible with high artistic standards and finance. That some members of the public will continue to be disappointed with future exhibits is inevitable but this will not deter the Committee from insisting that high standards as seen through the eyes of its Director will be the criteria by which exhibitions will be judged.<sup>649</sup>

The tone for the gallery's temporary exhibitions was set from its inaugural show, *Real Time*, by a recent graduate from the Elam School of Fine Arts, Leon Narbey, that opened in February 1970. This was a neon environmental installation that filled the gallery space, one of the earliest such exhibits in New Zealand.<sup>650</sup> In addition, the gallery ensured that it became a regular stop for touring shows.

### Robert Ballard

John Maynard resigned in June 1970, just a few months after the GBAG had opened.<sup>651</sup> His successor was Robert Ballard, who at the time of his application was a curator and instructor at the California College of Arts and Crafts in San Francisco.<sup>652</sup> Appointed in October 1970, he took up his new position in January 1971, remaining until January 1975. Art from the United States would play a key role during his tenure; not only would the GBAG host exhibitions supplied by the USIS and MoMA's International Program, it also itself initiated and toured exhibitions from the United States, as well as making purchases of American art.

The first of these self-initiated exhibitions was entitled *Works on Paper*, which featured fifty-five artworks by fifteen Californian artists. This show opened shortly

---

<sup>649</sup> Quoted in Susette Goldsmith, "Govett-Brewster Art Gallery: History Research Project," July, 2007, 20-21, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery Archives.

<sup>650</sup> For more details, see Michael Dunn, *New Zealand Sculpture: A History*, updated ed. (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2008), 122. Dunn incorrectly records the month of the opening as November 1970.

<sup>651</sup> Maynard would become the exhibitions officer at the ACAG in 1974.

<sup>652</sup> According to a letter that Ballard wrote to the *Taranaki Herald*, he had "been waiting two years for an appropriate position to allow him to move to New Zealand," noting that he and wife had become interested in this country through an acquaintance. Ballard was also in correspondence with an artist in the Bay of Islands, John Parry, who alerted him to the GBAG post. *Taranaki Herald*, 4 November 1970.

after Ballard took over as director, on 19 January 1971.<sup>653</sup> According to Ballard's press release, this was "the outcome of a suggestion given me by Mr John Maynard in celebration of my appointment as Director of the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery."<sup>654</sup> Ballard organised the exhibition from the United States, while Maynard saw to the local arrangements. The GBAG also acquired several pieces from this show, purchasing works by Kenneth Price, Myra Hocking and Robert Bechtle, while Ronald Dahl donated four works. The same year, it purchased another American work, a 1968 lithograph by Sam Francis. Later in 1971, the GBAG hosted and then toured an exhibition entitled *18 x 22* that Ballard secured through a contact, Dr. Harold Gregor, a professor in the art department at the Illinois State University. Gregor had organised this show originally for display in the United States and Ballard arranged with him to have a selection of the works, twenty-seven in total, sent to New Zealand. The premise behind the show was to send small canvases, measuring eighteen by twenty-two inches (hence the exhibition's title), to artists in the United States, Italy and England, with a request to create a work of art. There were no stipulations or restrictions on how the artist could use the canvas. The exhibition was displayed at the GBAG from 28 September to 24 October 1971 and then toured around the country, to the NAG, RMAG and the ACAG, as well as some provincial galleries. The following year, the most significant exhibition that Ballard initiated, *The State of California Painting*, came to New Zealand.

### ***The State of California Painting***

This exhibition was a key example of the role that the GBAG played in this period in bringing in exhibitions from overseas. It was a major show of contemporary American art, featuring very recent work representing a variety of avant-garde trends. Moreover, as a show of specifically Californian art, it served as a continuation of the relationship between New Zealand and the US West Coast, providing another opportunity for critics to explore the notion of a relationship between the art of the two regions.

---

<sup>653</sup> Subsequently, some of the works were displayed at Barry Lett Galleries in Auckland and Peter McLeavey Gallery in Wellington, where the show was called *The Californian Image*.

<sup>654</sup> *Works on Paper* press release, GBAG Exhibitions 1971, Box 2, 44F14, New Plymouth District Council Archives (hereafter cited as NPDC Archives).

## The origins of the show

Ballard had already conceived the idea of bringing works to New Zealand from California prior to his arrival in New Plymouth. In February 1971, soon after he had taken over as director, he wrote to contacts in California outlining his intention to organise an exhibition of painting from that state and requesting assistance in putting this together.<sup>655</sup> He also wrote to David Peters, the director of the QEIIAC, to inform him of his plans and to ask that the exhibition be considered for a subsidy, stating:

The theme of the exhibition would be contemporary trends in California painting and would include the majority of ideas circulating in that area. I believe this would be a major exhibition for New Zealand and a major catalogue should be produced.<sup>656</sup>

The QEIIAC would eventually provide a large sum of \$7,000 for the exhibition.<sup>657</sup> Ballard's American inquiries elicited a positive response, but it was a letter to Michael Walls, an art dealer based in San Francisco, that would prove to be the most significant. In this letter, dated 31 March 1971, Ballard informed Walls of his plan, writing, "I am assuming your offer to lend some works from your stable is still good" and asking for specific details on works that Walls would be willing to lend.<sup>658</sup> He also enclosed a list of twenty artists that he wanted to include, stating that he "would appreciate any suggestions as to additions or subtractions."<sup>659</sup>

This letter was incorrectly addressed and went astray, but Ballard resent it on 20 April, and Walls replied on 30 April. He offered to organise and select the show, the only caveat being that he did not want anyone else in the United States to be involved. In making this pitch, he pointed to his particular interest and knowledge of US West

---

<sup>655</sup> Ballard wrote letters to Philip Linhares of the San Francisco Art Institute (17 February 1971), William Donahey, the director of the California College of Arts and Crafts, (18 February 1971) and Hank Baum, Director, the Graphic Gallery, San Francisco (19 February 1971). GBAG Exhibitions 1972-1973, Box 3, 34E09, NPDC Archives.

<sup>656</sup> Ballard to Peters, 4 March 1971, *ibid*.

<sup>657</sup> QEIIAC annual report, *AJHR*, 1972, H42, 24.

<sup>658</sup> Ballard to Walls, 31 March 1971, GBAG Exhibitions 1972-1973, Box 3, 34E09, NPDC Archives. Ballard's phrasing demonstrates that he had previously asked Walls if he would be willing to send works to New Zealand, though not necessarily in the specific context of a survey show of Californian painting. Evidence that this occurred before Ballard left the United States is found in a letter to Philip Linhares: "I haven't heard from Michael Walls as of yet but before I left he promised me Staiger, Barletta, Sarkisian and Joel Bass." Ballard to Linhares, 20 April 1971, *ibid*.

<sup>659</sup> Ballard to Walls, 31 March 1971.

Coast painting and his contacts with artists and other dealers which would allow him to secure high quality works. He also expressed the belief that his involvement would create interest in the project, so that art museums on the West Coast might agree to exhibit the show once it returned to the United States. To this end, he included a list of what were, in his opinion, the established artists in California, and asterisked those that he felt needed to be part of such a show.<sup>660</sup> The total number of those marked in this way was thirty-five, which Walls believed was the maximum number for the exhibition. He did not include all the artists on Ballard's list, omitting those whose work he did not feel was of the right standard. Ballard willingly accepted Walls's offer and was, for the most part, happy with his recommendations, vetoing just two of the names that Walls had asterisked. He also sounded a note a caution over the type of work to be selected for two of the artists, John Altoon and Terry Allen, as he did not want to court unnecessary controversy.<sup>661</sup>

Walls subsequently set about contacting artists and gathering works for the exhibition, although he communicated only sporadically with Ballard during the process. Walls was successful in obtaining examples by each of the artists that he and Ballard had agreed on for the exhibition, which was a considerable achievement. Walls personally contacted and sometimes visited the majority of the artists and so secured a number of loans directly from them, some selected by the artist and some by Walls.<sup>662</sup> Other works were supplied by private dealers. There was also one further addition, a piece by Laddie John Dill, an artist whom Walls decided to include after he saw an exhibition of his work at the Pasadena Art Museum.<sup>663</sup> This meant that there were thirty-four works by the same number of artists for the exhibition.<sup>664</sup>

---

<sup>660</sup> Walls gave three asterisks to twenty artists that he believed were musts for such an exhibition, two asterisks to ten significant, if less crucial, figures, and one to five others whose work he believed was "of considerable interest without being as original and/or profound and/or influential as that of the people in the above categories." Walls to Ballard, 30 April 1971, GBAG Exhibitions 1972-1973, Box 3, 34E09, NPDC Archives.

<sup>661</sup> Ballard to Walls, 13 May 1971, *ibid.* Ballard's concern was not to do with political issues, but with sexual imagery. As he wrote, he did not think that this "will go too well in the New Zealand environment," further stating, "This is a drag to have to consider but New Zealand is really back in the 50's and we could get closed down which would do us much more harm than good. I'm sure good works of theirs could be found that would be acceptable." *Ibid.*

<sup>662</sup> See especially Walls to Ballard, 14 August 1971, GBAG Exhibitions 1972-1973, Box 3, 34E09, NPDC Archives.

<sup>663</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>664</sup> One work, by Robert Bechtle, was only displayed in New Plymouth, and was subsequently returned to the United States.

Walls had initially planned for the exhibition to leave the United States at the start of November 1971 and arrive in New Zealand in January 1972, so that Ballard could install it for opening in February.<sup>665</sup> However, the shipping was delayed by a dock strike at US West Coast ports, with the result that it did not arrive in New Plymouth until April 1972.<sup>666</sup> The show eventually opened at the GBAG on 27 May 1972, and ran until 25 June. It then travelled to the Waikato Art Gallery, ACAG, NAG, RMAG and finally the DPAG, where it closed on 19 May 1973. Ballard had also hoped to tour the exhibition to galleries in both Australia and the United States. The former did not eventuate, but in 1973 the exhibition toured to three institutions in the United States: Illinois State University; Lake View Art Centre, Peoria, Illinois, and Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

### The selection

As Ballard stated in his foreword to the accompanying catalogue, his aim in organising the exhibition was “to display a cross section, or survey, of the most important work being done in California.”<sup>667</sup> *The State of California Painting* certainly did offer a wide-ranging sample of recent work from that region, but lacked diversity in some respects. For instance, there were no examples of artwork from the vibrant Chicano art movement, nor were there any women included in the show. Walls had in fact included only one woman on the initial list he sent to Ballard. This was particularly disappointing when there was a growing awareness of the dearth of female representation in art museum exhibitions in California at the time.<sup>668</sup> Neither did the exhibition feature any explicitly political art, whether related to feminism, the civil rights movement, or the Vietnam War. Even so, the exhibition did include significant works by a variety of artists in a range of styles and media, from the traditional, such as oil on canvas and works on paper, to aluminium, plastics, argon and light.<sup>669</sup> Of particular importance was the broad definition of painting applied to

---

<sup>665</sup> Walls to Ballard, 14 August 1971.

<sup>666</sup> “Art Exhibition Arrives,” *Taranaki Herald*, 12 April 1972.

<sup>667</sup> Robert Ballard, foreword to *The State of California Painting*, by Govett-Brewster Art Gallery (New Plymouth: Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, 1972), [2].

<sup>668</sup> See Donna Conwell, “Protesting *Art and Technology*,” in Peabody et. al., *Pacific Standard Time*, 219.

<sup>669</sup> My analysis is limited by the lack of access to colour images; although all the works were reproduced in the catalogue, only four were depicted in colour.

the selection. As Walls outlined at the beginning of his catalogue essay, the line between painting and sculpture had become increasingly blurred: “When invited to select a survey exhibition of recent California painting, therefore, I chose to consider as ‘painting’ any work that is both wall-orientated and roughly two-dimensional.”<sup>670</sup>

With regard to style, the exhibition contained a range of recent Californian developments. First, there were examples of West Coast Pop, as seen, for instance, in the contributions from Ed Ruscha and Wayne Thiebaud. The latter’s painterly *Cherry Cake*, 1970, depicts a cake on a stand casting its shadow against a monochrome background. It is representative of Thiebaud’s concern both with the ordinary and with consumer culture. Ruscha’s *Spoil*, 1971 (figure 41), was based on his fascination with language, with the word “spoil” rendered in three-dimensional form against a textured background of blacks, greys and browns. It demonstrated Ruscha’s interest in experimenting with different types of material, in this case, gunpowder and pastel on paper. There were also several works showcasing the Photorealist trend that had emerged from Pop art in the mid-1960s. Like many Pop artists, those working in this mode often depicted banal subject matter in a carefully rendered and detached manner. One example of this is Richard McLean’s *Blue and White Start*, 1968, that shows a jockey on a race horse, a subject for which the artist was well-known at this time. Other works exemplified another common feature of this style, an interest in the urban environment. For instance, in *Yellow Chevrolet with Palm Trees*, 1970-71 (figure 42), Ralph Goings painted an anonymous carpark with three parked motor vehicles and two palm trees in the middle ground, their vertical forms echoed in a sign and telephone pole in the background.

The exhibition also had a variety of abstract work, including contributions by three well-established artists of international repute working in California at that time: John McLaughlin, Richard Diebenkorn and Sam Francis. McLaughlin, then in his eighties, supplied a recent painting entitled # 4 from 1971, which demonstrated the continuing evolution of his style towards greater simplification of expression. Diebenkorn was represented by *Ocean Park # 7*, a painting from the important eponymous series,

---

<sup>670</sup> Michael Walls, “Notes from the Land of Narcissus,” in Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, *The State of California Painting*, [2]. It is worth pointing out Walls’ misrepresentation of how he became involved in the exhibition, choosing the word “invited” rather than acknowledging that he specifically asked Ballard.

begun in 1967 after he moved from Berkeley to Los Angeles. Although abstract, this series relates to the Santa Monica landscape from which Diebenkorn drew his inspiration. *Ocean Park # 7* belongs to the first phase of the series, which is “characterized by strong diagonals, often disposed like beams holding up the surface of the picture.”<sup>671</sup> The Francis piece, *70-102*, 1970, is acrylic on paper, a medium he often utilised to explore ideas later translated onto canvas. It depicts four organic, amorphous blobs anchored in the four corners against a white background. As noted in the third chapter, Francis’s work had been identified by Clement Greenberg with Post-Painterly Abstraction, and there were other, younger, artists in *The State of California Painting* who were also exploring some of the same concerns. Two examples of their work were Joel Barletta’s *Untitled*, 1967, and Joel Bass’s *000111*, 1971 (figure 43), both related to the hard-edge style that Greenberg identified as another strand of Post-Painterly Abstraction. Barletta’s oil on canvas suggests three rectangles placed in front of each other, in different tones of yellow. Bass’s work, in synthetic lacquer on canvas, depicts four overlapping rectangles at different angles that have a sense of opaqueness, their colours shifting in relation to their placement.

There were also several works related to the trend known as Finish Fetish, which utilised new types of materials and techniques and had a particular concern with surface. Works in this mode also tended to be more sculptural. Two of the early pioneers of this development, Billy Al Bengston and Craig Kauffman, were represented in *The State of California Painting*. Bengston’s *Untitled*, 1971, is a burnished aluminium work that related to his interest in automobile culture. Kauffman’s *Untitled*, 1968, was based on his experimentation since 1964 with plastic vacuum-forming techniques.<sup>672</sup> It is a vacuum formed plexiglass wall relief with a lozenge-shaped bubble that expands towards the middle. The surface is highly polished with acrylic lacquer sprayed on the reverse, although the black-and-white reproduction in the catalogue does not reveal whether the colour in this piece is bright or more muted. Ronald Davis also utilised new plastic materials, and his work in the show, *Plane Divider*, 1970 (figure 44), is a piece in polyester resin and fibreglass. It depicts four horizontal rectangles in bright colours, each set at an angle, intersected by

---

<sup>671</sup> Livingston, “The Art of Richard Diebenkorn,” in Livingston, *The Art of Richard Diebenkorn*, 65.

<sup>672</sup> Ken D. Allan, Lucy Bradnock and Lisa Turvey, “For People Who Know the Difference: Defining the Pop Art Sixties,” in Peabody et. al, *Pacific Standard Time*, 156.



a black rectangular plane. The combination of the material and the perspectival rendering of the objects produces a three-dimensional effect that belies the two-dimensional nature of the painting, eliciting a sense that the rectangles float in the air.

Other works in the exhibition utilised light as an integral element. For example, Robert Irwin's *Untitled*, 1965-66, is a convex disc of tinted acrylic on formed aluminium, illuminated by lights that give it the appearance of dissolving into its surroundings. Similarly, Laddie John Dill's *Untitled*, 1971, consists of a glass tube about three metres in length filled with argon gas and lit up with differently coloured segments of white and tones of blue. The works by both artists also have a relationship to Minimalism in their presentation of autonomous objects that refer only to themselves. Finally, another recent development was represented by Ed Moses's *Flanks*, 1971. This work, in powdered pigment, fibreglass cloth, and acrylic resin, is a form of Process painting, where the emphasis is on the action that produced the piece. It was one of a range of works of the period in which Moses, as described by Glenn Phillips, "used strings saturated with powdered pigment to snap lines across a piece of unstretched canvas [which] was then submerged in a puddle of resin that extended beyond the edges of the canvas, creating new edges for the resin-encased object."<sup>673</sup>

### The framing of the exhibition

The two main vehicles for framing *The State of California Painting* for the New Zealand audience were Robert Ballard's press release and the show's catalogue. In the former, Ballard presented it as "one of the most important exhibitions to tour New Zealand," and made clear its central premise as a representation of a survey of major recent Californian painting.<sup>674</sup> He defined some of the trends represented, writing that the exhibition contained examples of "the new realist movement," "plastic work," both painterly and hard-edge abstraction, as well as "artists representing the unclassifiable aspects of the individual Californian scene."<sup>675</sup> He also sought to create a broader link between the works in the exhibition and the region from which they came, writing, "The individuality of the works reflect the individual nature of the

---

<sup>673</sup> Glenn Phillips, "Process Painting," in Peabody et. al., *Pacific Standard Time*, 226.

<sup>674</sup> *The State of California Painting* press release, GBAG Exhibitions 1972-1973, Box 3, 34E09, NPDC Archives.

<sup>675</sup> *Ibid.*

California life style.”<sup>676</sup> Similar ideas found expression in the catalogue, which had a very short foreword by Ballard, an essay by Michael Wells entitled “Notes from the Land of Narcissus,” and two short artist statements, by Billy Al Bengston and Jack Barth.<sup>677</sup> Ballard’s foreword first restated the purpose of the show, then offered a broad approach to looking at the works: “The viewer will find that the interest lies in subtlety of colour, light and surface for the majority of works. This, however, does not limit the selections but offers a wide and objective range.”<sup>678</sup>

Walls’s primary goal in his essay was to provide a wider understanding of Californian art. He did not examine the exhibition itself, but instead discussed some of the key artists and movements within the modern art of California (most of them represented in the show), as well as its general features and something of its history. However, he did not address the political and social contexts in which the art on display was produced. Rather, a key feature of his discussion was to frame the show in terms of what made Californian art different to that from New York. As he wrote,

It is a matter of almost universal acceptance that New York has been the most significant center of the visual arts, in this country and in the world, since the 1940’s. Almost as widely believed is the position of California (and chiefly Los Angeles) as secondary only to that of New York. It is not surprising, therefore, that much has been written in recent years concerning what might be characteristic, or even unique, about work made in California, distinguishing it from that of New York.<sup>679</sup>

Walls’s need to measure Californian against New York art demonstrates the power that the latter city held in the art world at this time and implicit in his presentation was the idea that art from New York was the standard against which art from other places should be judged. As part of this, he also argued that what set Californian art apart

---

<sup>676</sup> Ibid.

<sup>677</sup> Barth’s contribution discussed concepts associated with Minimalism in sophisticated language, whereas Bengston’s was a succinct counter to the need to find ways to define art based on its point of origin. As he wrote:

Michael Wells [*sic*] has asked me to prepare a statement about the status of and history of the contemporary West Coast artist. I would like to summarize the subject with a quote attributed to the most famous artist in Los Angeles. ‘Everything that has been written about the artist on the West Coast is bullshit.’

Bengston, “A Participating Artist’s Statement,” in Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, *The State of California Painting*, [74].

<sup>678</sup> Ballard, foreword to *The State of California Painting*, by Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, [2].

<sup>679</sup> Walls, “Notes from the Land of Narcissus,” [2].

was its isolation, both in a geographical sense and in terms of the operation of the art scene:

In contrast to Paris and New York, the cities of the West Coast have no real tradition of painting. There are painters of international repute in California, but they are isolated figures, not sharing in a tightly-knit community of artists. This isolation is one of both geography and ideology [*sic*].<sup>680</sup>

Here, too, he ended his essay by examining the specific relationship between West Coast artists and New York, stating the value to West Coast art of growing contacts between the two regions.

It is interesting to note that both Ballard's and Walls's discussion of the exhibition did not seek to link Californian art in any way with New Zealand art. This had not been the reason for the show, which was based on Ballard's own background and contacts, and it is unlikely that Ballard was aware of the history of this association. Even so, it would be a key consideration for some New Zealand critics in their assessment of the show.

#### New Zealand responses to the exhibition

The subsidy provided by the QEIIAC demonstrated the importance that body placed on *The State of California Painting*, and in its 1972 annual report it described the show as "likely to attract the interest of the growing number of young people patronising galleries."<sup>681</sup> The QEIIAC's support meant the exhibition had an extensive tour, but I have not uncovered any information on how well-attended the it was. However, the exhibition received good press coverage and the critical responses were, for the most part, positive. Within these, the two most meaningful reviews came from Bryan James,<sup>682</sup> writing in New Plymouth's *Daily News*, and Hamish Keith in the *Auckland Star*.

James began his review by considering the importance of the exhibition and how it might influence New Zealand artists. Although he did not feel that it would have any

---

<sup>680</sup> Ibid., [3].

<sup>681</sup> QEIIAC annual report, *AJHR*, 1972, H42, 9.

<sup>682</sup> James was an art critic and artist living in New Plymouth.

effect on New Zealand's top artists, writing it "can teach them nothing, and their art is at least the equal of, and is often better than, the paintings in this show," he thought that it would have a "considerable" influence on younger artists, with the caveat that "whether the results of this will be good or bad for New Zealand art will have to await future assessment."<sup>683</sup> However, he felt that the greatest impact that the exhibition would have would be on viewers in New Zealand, writing "anything that explodes our archaically traditional views on art deserves the widest possible support."<sup>684</sup> James also provided some background to the development of art in California and, for the most part, wrote positively about the works on display. He was particularly effusive about those works in a Post Painterly Abstractionist mode, arguing that it was here that the "exhibition becomes brilliant."<sup>685</sup> He also singled out for praise works by Robert Cottingham, Thiebaud and McLaughlin, although he believed that the show had some "dead spots," specifically "those allied to the so-called 'funky' school of California painting."<sup>686</sup> In Auckland, Keith was also complimentary of the show's contents, writing that "the overall standard of the collection is fairly consistent but some painters are immediately impressive."<sup>687</sup> He praised in particular Diebenkorn, Thiebaud and McLaughlin, although he did offer notes of criticism, calling some of the realist works "just plain ugly," and accusing some of the abstract artists of "manufacturing fashionable nonsense," without specifying who these were.<sup>688</sup>

Most notably, both James and Keith believed there were parallels between the development of painting in California and in New Zealand, and this was a central focus of their reviews. James's argument was based on the notion that New Zealand art was now directly linked to New Zealand as a place, that artists found inspiration from within their own country, rather than looking elsewhere. To James, "Californian art has undergone exactly the same transformation, although its emergence as an individual style, or grouping of styles, has occurred somewhat earlier than here."<sup>689</sup> For Keith, both regions were "dependent cultures," and he believed this had led to

---

<sup>683</sup> Bryan James, Stage and Studio, *Daily News*, 20 May 1972.

<sup>684</sup> Ibid.

<sup>685</sup> Ibid.

<sup>686</sup> Ibid.

<sup>687</sup> Hamish Keith, "Exploring in All Directions," Weekender Art News and Reviews, *AS*, 4 November 1972.

<sup>688</sup> Ibid.

<sup>689</sup> Bryan James, Stage and Studio, *Daily News*, 20 May 1972.

similarities in the artistic development.<sup>690</sup> This was a reiteration of the idea that he had expressed in 1968 in the *ACAG Quarterly*, following his return from the United States. In this more recent piece, he used *Painting from the Pacific* as a point of comparison, arguing that although painting in both places had changed, they had done so in similar ways. Specifically, he claimed that art in both regions shared the lack of a common style, the awareness of artists in both areas of their peripheral location, and the fact they placed their own interpretation on international styles. To Keith, this meant that

in the two areas the results are much the same. There is an open-ended situation as far as style is concerned. Technique is more patiently pursued, because there is a feeling that there are outside standards which will inevitable [*sic*] seem higher, and there are far fewer chiefs in proportion to Indians.<sup>691</sup>

It was because of these affinities that he concluded that the show was of great importance to New Zealand:

It makes a better yardstick for our own position and development than far more spectacular exhibitions ever could.  
After all, we see too few exhibitions from outside New Zealand which freely allow us to use the critical faculties our own environment has provided us with.<sup>692</sup>

The three other reviews of the show, by G. E. Fairburn in the *Waikato Times*, T. J. McNamara in the *New Zealand Herald* and Trevor Moffitt in the *Press*, were much shorter. Like Keith and James, McNamara saw the value of the exhibition in terms of its relationship with New Zealand art, stating that it “gives an important insight into the work of an interesting art scene and demonstrates links with what is happening in the best of New Zealand art.”<sup>693</sup> Moffitt wrote a fairly straightforward description of the show, offering some criticism of the realist pieces, but concluding on a positive note: “But whatever the mode of expression, the work is confident and makes up in energy what it may lack in refinement.”<sup>694</sup> It was only Fairburn’s review that took an entirely negative perspective, demonstrating not just a degree of anti-Americanism

---

<sup>690</sup> Keith, “Exploring in All Directions.”

<sup>691</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>692</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>693</sup> T. J. McNamara, “Opportunity to Understand ‘New Realists,’ ” *NZH*, 31 October 1972.

<sup>694</sup> G. T. M. [Trevor Moffitt], “Energy in U.S. Art Works,” *Press*, 29 March 1973.

but also that there was still apathy to modern art amongst certain segments of the visual arts community in New Zealand. He began with the notion that the United States was culturally bereft and that its art was a reflection of a degenerate culture:

America, it is frequently claimed, is the only nation to have emerged from barbarism into decadence without an intervening period of civilisation.

A modest over-statement, maybe, but in any case more applicable to the Far West, as demonstrated by the current art show to be seen in the Museum.<sup>695</sup>

He then described the show as “pitifully thin” and the work as “crude and unskilled, smack in the middle of the do-it-yourself tradition.”<sup>696</sup> Ballard himself wrote a letter to the editor of the *Waikato Times* to protest against Fairburn’s discussion of the show, arguing that Fairburn’s “critical statements, at best, have little to do with appraisal in terms of the aesthetic nature of the exhibition” and in particular took issue with Fairburn’s characterisation of the work on display as “crude and unskilled,” noting the technical proficiency of many of the artists.<sup>697</sup>

#### Assessing the impact the exhibition

*The State of California Painting* was, firstly, a significant exhibition that gave New Zealanders the opportunity to see recent works from California in variety of media and encompassing such trends as West Coast Pop, Photorealism and Finish Fetish. The inclusion of a range of three-dimensional works challenged traditional notions of painting and, as such, it was the most daring show of American art to come to New Zealand to that point. As a show of art from California, it can also be viewed in relation to the continuing interest from New Zealand in art from the US West Coast. Critics approached the exhibition in terms of an affinity between the art of the two regions, harking back to ideas first expressed in relation to *Painting from the Pacific*, and believed that it could provide insights into New Zealand art. However, it is also important to recognise that this was not the impetus for the show, which was instead based on Ballard’s own background and contacts.

---

<sup>695</sup> G. E. Fairburn, “Contemporary Art Seen in Museum,” *Waikato Times*, 11 August 1972.

<sup>696</sup> Ibid.

<sup>697</sup> Ballard to the editor, *Waikato Times*, 16 August 1972, GBAG Exhibitions 1972-1973, Box 3, 34E09, NPDC Archives.

There is little evidence that the show had a large impact on art practice in New Zealand, not least because artists in New Zealand were now increasingly familiar with overseas trends. For example, painters such as Ray Thorburn had employed a hard-edge style in their work for several years and indeed, Thorburn had already used a similar process to some Californian artists in the creation of his artworks. From at least 1970 he had outsourced the spray painting of works from his Modular series to a commercial car painter. This was reminiscent of Billy Al Bengston's work of the 1960s.<sup>698</sup> Similarly, the sculptor Carl Sydow in Christchurch had been utilising modern industrial materials such as plastic tubing, hose and perspex in his work since 1967,<sup>699</sup> and light was a key component of Leon Narbey's neon environmental installation *Real Time* from 1970. However, the show may have had some effect on Don Driver. He was working at the GBAG at the time and was thus in a position to look closely at the works. This exposure may have inspired him to explore further the potential of different media in his own practice. Driver was already working with a variety of materials and his works increasingly blurred the line between painting and sculpture, as shown by his wall reliefs in aluminium and lacquer from 1971-72. From 1974 to 1975 he produced the *Cosmos* series of free-standing boxes that utilised steel as well as plastic materials, a development that may in part have been inspired by works in *The State of California Painting*. In addition, the exhibition also contained the type of works that younger artists wanted to see, especially if one recalls the reaction of students at the Elam School of Fine Arts to the *Pacific Cities Loan Exhibition*. No doubt the opportunity to see first-hand some of the newer trends in art and works in a variety of different materials would have been of particular value to art students.

#### After *The State of California Painting*

After *The State of California Painting*, Ballard continued to solicit and organise exhibitions from the United States, and the GBAG continued to host other touring shows from that country, although not necessarily of American art. Ballard was not always successful with his enquiries, but his energetic agenda of approaching a range

---

<sup>698</sup> See Ken D. Allan, Lucy Bradnock and Lisa Turvey, "FOR PEOPLE WHO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE: Defining the Pop Art Sixties," in Peabody et. al., *Pacific Standard Time*, 158.

<sup>699</sup> Dunn, *New Zealand Sculpture*, 107.

of institutions and individuals led to a variety of successes. At the end of 1972, he mounted an exhibition of works on paper by Leroy Parker, a Californian artist, that toured to the Waikato Art Gallery. The GBAG also purchased a work from this show. In addition, Ballard arranged an exhibition entitled *Master Drawings from the Lyman Allyn Museum* from an institution based in Connecticut. This comprised of forty drawings by a variety of French artists including Poussin, Chardin, Boucher, Fragonard, Ingres, Delacroix, Degas, Renoir, Cezanne, Rouault and Sisley. It was shown at the GBAG from 11 April to 6 May 1973, after which it toured to the Manawatu Art Gallery, RMAG, DPAG, Dowse Art Gallery, Waikato Art Museum (formerly the Waikato Art Gallery) and the ACAG. In that year, too, Ballard also began arrangements for an exhibition entitled *Three Dimensional Fibre*, focused on textiles, which would feature several American artists. This was held at the GBAG in 1974, and then toured to the Waikato Art Museum, NAG, ACAG, RMAG and the DPAG. In January 1975 Ballard left the GBAG to take up a role as the assistant director at Barrington Gallery, a new private gallery venture in Auckland initiated by Peter Webb, formerly the exhibitions officer for the ACAG.<sup>700</sup> His term as director of the GBAG had been of great significance for that gallery, building on the efforts of John Maynard in establishing it at the forefront of the New Zealand art scene. Following Ballard's departure, the GBAG continued to host exhibitions from the United States, but it was less proactive and would no longer be responsible for organising or touring such shows.

---

<sup>700</sup> However, just a few months later he returned to the United States for personal reasons. "Leaving for U.S.," *Taranaki Herald*, 1 May 1975.



## Chapter Five: Interactions Initiated from the United States, 1969-1974

This chapter focuses on those interactions in the period 1969 to 1974 that were instigated primarily from the United States, by the United States Information Service and the Museum of Modern Art's International Program. Around 1969, the former rekindled its involvement in art exhibitions, and from 1970 to 1974 the latter toured five small-scale shows to New Zealand and four larger exhibitions to the Auckland City Art Gallery. The most notable of these, in the context of this thesis, was *Some Recent American Art*, displayed at the ACAG in 1974. This was also accompanied by two artists, Mel Bochner and Robert Irwin, and the art critic and activist Lucy Lippard. In examining the development and reception of these interactions, I will again consider their relationship to the wider political context of the time, particularly the Vietnam War.

### The United States Information Service in the 1970s

The role of the USIS in art-related interactions had been very limited in the 1960s. Its most notable action occurred in 1964 when it sponsored the restoration of John Singleton Copley's 1771 portrait of Mrs. Humphrey Devereux in the collection of the National Art Gallery.<sup>701</sup> As the decade drew to a close, however, the Wellington branch of the USIS revived its interest in utilising art as part of its programme on a more consistent basis. From 1969 it again began touring exhibitions around the country, with a particular focus on provincial centres.<sup>702</sup> This was primarily the result of a proactive public affairs officer, John Hutchison, and energetic and resourceful USIS staff who made effective use of meagre resources. It was also the period of the Vietnam War, which for the United States had continued to unsuccessfully drag on and was increasingly attracting protest.

---

<sup>701</sup> For details on how this work came to New Zealand, see "Object: Mrs Humphrey Devereux," accessed 25 April 2015, <http://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/object/41241>. For details on the restoration, see "American's Masterpiece Lives Again in Vibrant Colours," *EP*, 9 March 1965.

<sup>702</sup> Although the USIS records held at the US National Archives for this period are very patchy, it has been possible to piece together an understanding of its activities through the archival holdings of the Christchurch Art Gallery and the New Plymouth District Council, as well as newspaper and magazine articles from the period.

The USIS already believed that it had played a useful role in the decision by Prime Minister Keith Holyoake to commit New Zealand troops to Vietnam in 1965. As it as stated in a February 1966 communication to the United States Information Agency:

It would be naive to believe that the torrent of U.S. Vietnam policy material, background, information, etc. which USIS/Wellington kept flowing across the desk of the Prime Minister, Members of his Cabinet and Parliamentarians had no influence on the positive position taken by Prime Minister Holyoake.<sup>703</sup>

In this report, the USIS also detailed a range of initiatives intended to present the US view of the conflict in Vietnam, both to counter protests and anti-war arguments and to encourage views that aligned with US policy. As the conflict developed, these efforts continued and I would argue that the renewed programme of exhibitions that the USIS toured in the period under investigation, even though it did not overtly address the Vietnam War, was related to this strategy. That is, exhibitions were designed to present a positive image of the United States at a time when protests against its actions in Vietnam were increasing in New Zealand.

From 1969 to 1973, when the United States withdrew its combat forces from Vietnam, the USIS toured at least seven exhibitions around New Zealand. The first of these was *Contemporary Posters in America* (which had a focus on Pop art), and this was shortly followed by an exhibition of reproductions of paintings by James Audubon, the nineteenth-century American artist and ornithologist. The next USIS show, and also its most ambitious in this period, was of works by Frederic Remington, an artist and writer who had chronicled the old American West. Opened at the NAG on 8 March 1971 by the US ambassador to New Zealand, Kenneth Franzheim, this also travelled to the ACAG and the Robert MacDougall Art Gallery, after which parts of it were shown in several smaller centres. This exhibition, which will be looked at in more detail below, offers the clearest demonstration of both the proactive nature of the USIS in Wellington at this time and how it used its programme to present the United States in as positive a way as possible.

---

<sup>703</sup> USIS Wellington to USIA, "USIS Wellington Country Assessment: Report for Calendar Year 1965," 17 February 1966, 2, New Zealand [folder 1/2], 1959-1966, Records Concerning Exhibits in Foreign Countries, RG306, NACP.

Three other shows followed in quick succession, exhibited around the country from 1972 to 1973. These were a display of reproductions of the work of the well-known landscape painter, Andrew Wyeth, an exhibition entitled *Table Top Sculpture* that featured eleven small mass-produced pieces designed by American artists, and another called *The Photographer's Art* that consisted of fifty-seven photographs intended to depict "a wide cross-section of American life."<sup>704</sup> Finally, in 1973, the USIS toured a large-scale show entitled *Contemporary American Prints* to the art galleries in Dunedin, Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland. This consisted of sixty-one original prints by the likes of Josef Albers, Alexander Calder, Jim Dine, Helen Frankenthaler, Adolph Gottlieb, Lee Krasner, Roy Lichtenstein, Claes Oldenburg and Robert Rauschenberg, in styles ranging from Abstract Expressionism to hard-edge abstraction and Pop art. The circulation of this show, and the earlier display of Pop art posters, indicates that exhibitions of modern American art were no longer deemed contentious by the USIS, even though its preference tended towards traditional art.

### Frederic Remington

When Kenneth Franzheim took up his appointment as ambassador to New Zealand in 1969, he brought with him four original paintings by Remington, loaned by the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. This prompted the USIS staff in Wellington to develop the idea of putting together a show of this artist for New Zealand. Subsequently, a member of the USIS staff, Judith Cornwell, sought further examples of his work during an orientation tour of the United States in 1970, requesting loans for the exhibition.<sup>705</sup> Ultimately, she was able to obtain seven further original paintings from The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, on top of the four brought over by Franzheim (in total there were five oils and six watercolours), a bronze sculpture, *The Rattlesnake*, from the Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth, Texas, and twenty-one reproductions (figure 45). All the works depicted traditional images of the old American West: cowboys, the frontier landscape, the US cavalry and Native Americans. American Airlines paid the cost of transporting the exhibition to New Zealand and the National Airways Corporation, New Zealand's domestic airline at the

---

<sup>704</sup> John Hutchison to Brian Muir, director of the RMAG, 25 May 1971, Exhibition File 49, CAG Archives.

<sup>705</sup> Dorothy Moses, " 'Wayside' Show Reaped Benefits For Project Concern," *New Zealand Woman's Weekly*, 3 May 1971, 16-17.

time, covered the cost of transporting it around the country for its display in Wellington, Auckland and Christchurch. Subsequently, after the main exhibition was concluded, the USIS handed a second set of reproductions over to the National Airways Corporation to display at some its Aircentres. Later, this set was also displayed in smaller towns around the country.<sup>706</sup>

I would suggest that the USIS intended *Frederic Remington* to be a non-controversial show featuring a popular view of the United States that would have a wide public appeal. It put a great deal of effort into promoting the exhibition; it was one of the most highly publicised art shows of the year, featured on radio and previewed in several newspapers and magazines. For example, Robert Hardy Andrews wrote an article for the *New Zealand Listener* entitled “The Man Who Invented John Wayne” that focused on the development of Remington’s career as an artist and his role in creating the romantic vision of the Wild West.<sup>707</sup> The USIS also arranged with the Kerridge-Odeon cinema chain a festival of John Wayne western films to coincide with the exhibition in Wellington, Auckland and Christchurch.<sup>708</sup> It is probably no coincidence that Wayne was heavily anti-Communist and a vocal supporter of the US presence in Vietnam. The exhibition did have a good public response. In Auckland, it received around 3,800 visitors in its first six days alone,<sup>709</sup> and in Christchurch over 9,000 people visited it, which was the RMAG’s highest attendance for that year.<sup>710</sup> However, it had a less positive critical response, reflecting the fact that the art community in New Zealand was primarily interested in exhibitions of avant-garde American art. Hamish Keith’s review, “Stodgy in Close-up,” is a good example of the negative reaction to the show. In this he argued that Remington “seldom rises above simple illustration” and called the works “as stodgily middle

---

<sup>706</sup> Evidence for the display of a second set of reproductions by the National Airways Corporation comes from *ibid.*, 18. As will be discussed, the first set had been auctioned off and were delivered to their buyers following the conclusion of the tour of the main exhibition. Regarding the display in provincial towns, nineteen reproductions were, for example, exhibited at the Sarjeant Art Gallery, Wanganui, in September 1971, and fifteen at the New Plymouth Library in August 1972. “Old West Paintings on Display,” *Wanganui Chronicle*, 7 September 1971; “Remington Works on Show,” *Taranaki Herald*, 3 August 1972.

<sup>707</sup> Robert Hardy Andrews, “The Man Who Invented John Wayne,” *New Zealand Listener*, 8 March 1971, 2-3. Other previews included Hamish Keith, “He Made the West His Own,” *Weekender’s Art News and Reviews, AS*, 3 April 1971; “The Fastest Brush in the West,” *NZH*, 13 February 1971; “Wild West Comes to Wellington,” *EP*, 6 March 1971.

<sup>708</sup> Judith Cornwell to Brian Muir, 24 February 1971, Exhibition File 35A, CAG Archives.

<sup>709</sup> Minutes, ACC PLC, 20 April 1971, 1, Minute Book 1970, ACC 109, Item 13, AC Archives. I have not found a record of the total attendance in Auckland.

<sup>710</sup> Muir to the manager of American Airlines, 25 June 1971, Exhibition File 35A, CAG Archives.

American as last year's apple pie."<sup>711</sup> In contrast, the more conservative John Oakley was complimentary of the show, describing Remington as "a fine draughtsman with a keen eye for action, a facile brush, a good sense of colour and a flair for naturalistic composition."<sup>712</sup>

Notably, too, as part of the promotion of the exhibition, the US ambassador and his wife held a benefit showing of the works at their home in Lower Hutt on 6 March, two days before the exhibition opened at the NAG. The purpose of this was to raise funds for the charity Project Concern. This had been founded in 1961 to help provide medical aid to developing countries, and one of its earliest sites of operation was South Vietnam. The private exhibition showing received important publicity, with dedicated articles in both the *New Zealand Woman's Weekly* and the *Evening Post*.<sup>713</sup> Around two hundred guests were invited, at \$10 for a double ticket, and nineteen of the reproductions in the show were auctioned off by New Zealand's minister of finance, Robert Muldoon, with buyers receiving their purchases at the conclusion of the main exhibition's tour. This philanthropic event clearly demonstrated the desire of the US embassy to present the United States in a positive light. Moreover, the involvement of Muldoon suggests the solidarity between the New Zealand and US governments at this time. However, the USIS exhibitions were not devoid of controversy and did prompt reactions that indicates that there was an increasing recognition in New Zealand that government-sponsored cultural activities had a political motivation.

### Art and protest

As noted in Chapter One in relation to *Eight American Artists*, the art critic Eric Ramsden had understood that shows circulated by the USIS were intended to emphasise American culture, and New Zealanders involved in the art scene at the time, such as Hamish Keith and Ross Ritchie, have spoken to me of their recognition of these as forms of propaganda.<sup>714</sup> However, the earliest evidence I have found of

---

<sup>711</sup> Hamish Keith, "Stodgy in Close-up," *Weekender's Art News and Reviews*, AS, 10 April 1971.

<sup>712</sup> John Oakley, "Wild West Art on Display," *Star*, Press Clippings Book 1, CAG Archives.

<sup>713</sup> Moses, "'Wayside' Show," 16-18; "Minister of Finance Holds Spotlight at Charity Sale of Paintings," *EP*, 8 March 1971.

<sup>714</sup> Keith, discussion; Ritchie, discussion.

specific protest against these exhibitions or what they stood for comes from early January 1973. At the opening of the show of Andrew Wyeth reproductions at the Canterbury Society of Arts Gallery in Christchurch, as the *Press* recorded, guests were greeted “by the best-dressed demonstration against the war in Vietnam that Christchurch has ever seen.”<sup>715</sup> This consisted of members of the group “Christchurch Concerned Academics” in their academic gowns handing out pamphlets asking for donations to the New Zealand Medical Aid Committee for Vietnam. At around the same time, Brian Muir, director of the RMAG, considered cancelling the *Contemporary American Prints* exhibition as a result of the renewed US bombing campaign against North Vietnam in December 1972.<sup>716</sup> Muir wrote to the USIS public affairs officer, John Hutchison, with his concerns and, although there is no record of this first letter, nor of Hutchison’s reply, Muir’s subsequent response related,

His Worship the Mayor and I wish to state that we are both fully in agreement with the basic humanitarian ideals of those, and particularly those of our members who are concerned at the renewed bombing in Vietnam as part of your country’s policy. We do not feel that any circumstances whatsoever can justify the wilful loss of human life...As much as we would wish it so, it no longer seems possible to isolate art and we are all very much the poorer for that.<sup>717</sup>

However, as Muir further stated in this letter, “since the invitations have now gone out, and we might well achieve an effect other than the one we wish, which is to avoid a confrontation, the showing of the collection of prints and the opening will now proceed.”<sup>718</sup> The exhibition opened in Christchurch in February and went ahead without disruption, no doubt because by this stage direct US involvement in Vietnam had ended following the ceasefire agreement between the North and South in January 1973.

The incidents described demonstrate that there was a growing recognition in New Zealand that cultural events and exhibitions could function as propaganda, and that they were seen as legitimate targets for political protest. In any case, the involvement

---

<sup>715</sup> “American Artist Shows Paintings,” *Press*, 8 January 1973.

<sup>716</sup> Designated Operation Linebacker II, this campaign was also known as the Christmas bombings and generated a great deal of international and domestic outrage. David L. Anderson, *The Columbia History of the Vietnam War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 233.

<sup>717</sup> Muir to Hutchison, 15 January 1973, Exhibition File 63, CAG Archives.

<sup>718</sup> *Ibid.*

of the USIS in art exhibitions would soon decline again, although there is no indication that this was related specifically to the end of the Vietnam War. I have found evidence for only two further shows that it brought to New Zealand in the 1970s, both in 1976, which coincided with the two hundred-year anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.<sup>719</sup>

### **The International Program and New Zealand**

Although the USIS's revived interest in art exhibitions was significant, the most important relationship in this area in the first half of the 1970s for New Zealand art galleries, especially the ACAG, was with MoMA's International Program. As discussed in Chapter Three, MoMA had sent out several exhibitions to New Zealand and Australia as part of the broader expansion of its operations in the mid-1960s, culminating in *Two Decades of American Painting*, which travelled to Australia in 1967. The success of this prompted Waldo Rasmussen (the person in charge of the International Program) to advocate for the continued expansion of the International Program's activities in that country. As he stated at a meeting of the International Council (the body set up to fund the operations of the Program),

The Australian museums hope that [*Two Decades of American Painting*] can mark the beginning of a continuous program of exchange, and I am hoping that we can arrange to send them some of the exhibitions we circulate in the United States, arranging their itineraries so they travel to Australia from the West Coast.<sup>720</sup>

As a result, the International Council established a Program Sub-Committee for Australasia to discuss exhibition opportunities for this region. Initially, this was concerned with those countries that had received *Two Decades of American Painting*: Japan, India and Australia.<sup>721</sup> As it developed, however, it was Australia that would become the main beneficiary and, as a consequence of this, New Zealand would also become involved.

---

<sup>719</sup> These were *Creative America: Ceramics and Sculpture*, featuring one work each by forty-five American artists, which the USIS displayed at its recently opened Information Centre on Princes Street in Auckland, and a show of prints by Richard Anuskiewicz and Paul Jenkins circulated to the ACAG and GBAG.

<sup>720</sup> "Eleventh Annual Meeting, The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art," 10 October 1967, 18-19, IC/IP V.E.280, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>721</sup> "Australasia," undated document, IC/IP V.E.404, MoMA Archives, NY.

## The International Program and Australia

Initially, however, despite Rasmussen's observation that Australian art galleries wanted a programme of exchange, when the International Program offered exhibitions of Arshile Gorky drawings and the Sidney and Harriet Janis Collection to Australia in 1968 these were both declined. I have not been able to ascertain the full reasons behind this rejection but one likely factor was that the International Program's main correspondence was with the National Gallery of Victoria, whose ability to receive exhibitions was hampered at this time because it was relocating to a new building in 1968. Moreover, at this point the International Program itself ran into difficulties, related to the controversial ten-month tenure of Bates Lowry as director of MoMA in 1968 and 1969.<sup>722</sup> In addition, in 1969 the International Program was restructured. It was separated from the Department of Circulating Exhibitions (which was dissolved), and became its own entity with Rasmussen as director. Following this, the development of a new Australasian programme began. This was also encouraged by an Australian, John Stringer, the former exhibitions officer at the NGV who was appointed to the position of as assistant director of the International Program in 1970.<sup>723</sup>

Exhibitions now proposed for Australian tours included a show of modern American sculpture, and another of drawings by modern masters,<sup>724</sup> and in the latter half of 1970 MoMA put together a broader programme proposal. Neither the archives at MoMA or the NGV reveal the full details of this, but a key document is a letter sent by Rasmussen to Eric Westbrook, director of the NGV, on 6 October 1970. In this, Rasmussen wrote first that the modern American sculpture show had been cancelled, but that it had been agreed at MoMA that an exhibition entitled *100 Master European Drawings* should go to Australia and New Zealand. Also enclosed was a summary sheet of exhibitions for Westbrook to present at the forthcoming conference of

---

<sup>722</sup> Oral History Program, interview with Waldo Rasmussen, 1 November 1994, 47-50, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>723</sup> As John Stringer related in a letter to Ian North, curator of the paintings at the Art Gallery of South Australia: "While trying not to appear self-congratulatory [*sic*], I must point out that the recent upsurge in the exhibitions traveling to Australia is due primarily to Waldo and me." Stringer to North, 15 November 1974, IC/IP I.A.2297, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>724</sup> Stringer to Gordon Thompson, deputy director, NGV, 7 July 1970, IC/IP I.A.2026, MoMA Archives, NY.



Australian art gallery directors. The exhibitions listed were four monographs, *Jean Dubuffet*, *Picasso: Master Printmaker* and the photographers *Brassaï* and *Bill Brandt*, and two group shows, *Surrealism* and *The Passionate Years*, to feature German Expressionism. However, Rasmussen also noted that “this advance information is naturally sketchy and tentative,” and asked for comments on each of the exhibitions, on proposed venues, and on the intended programme generally, writing,

if you and your colleagues feel that some of the exhibitions are not of particular interest to the Australian public, or that other kinds of programs should be given higher priority, I would appreciate your frank comments. Hopefully, we want to extend our programs in Australia, and in doing so we want to respond as much as possible to your interests and your priorities.<sup>725</sup>

This letter indicates not only that the International Program had just recently worked out a plan for Australia, but also that Australian art galleries had had little input into this, as they were only now being asked for comments. Of importance, too, is the mention of New Zealand in relation to *100 Master European Drawings*, which indicated that this country was once again part of MoMA’s plans.

### The New Zealand perspective

As noted in Chapter Four, New Zealand’s relationship with the International Program had suffered a hiatus following the display of *The Photographer’s Eye*. At the start of 1968, Gordon White had written to Rasmussen to inform him that the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council needed to cut its exhibition programme,<sup>726</sup> and the refurbishment of the ACAG building restricted that institution’s ability to host exhibitions. Despite these setbacks, New Zealanders would soon look to re-establish contact with MoMA as a potential source of exhibitions. For example, in 1968 A. J. Thomas, deputy director of the Auckland Festival Society, visited New York and spoke with Inez Garson, associate director of the Department of Circulating Exhibitions at MoMA, about the possibility of exhibitions being sent to New Zealand for the Auckland Festival. Garson initially suggested an exhibition of the

---

<sup>725</sup> Rasmussen to Westbrook, 6 October 1970, IC/IP I.A.2025, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>726</sup> The evidence for this is a subsequent letter from White to Rasmussen dated 23 June 1969, in which White wrote, “You may recall that I wrote to you some eighteen months ago concerning travelling exhibitions. Our economy was going through a financial crisis at that time and it became necessary to curtail our exhibition programme.” IC/IP I.A.1876, MoMA Archives, NY.

photographer Dorothea Lange, and Thomas replied to Garson to express the Society's interest in this show for the 1970 Festival.<sup>727</sup> Unfortunately, however, this did not come to fruition.<sup>728</sup> Subsequently, the QEIIAC would look to renew relations with MoMA, and the ACAG also made contact. On 23 June 1969, White wrote to Rasmussen to inform him that the QEIIAC's situation had improved and that he would like information on exhibitions that MoMA had available for touring.<sup>729</sup> In addition, as previously noted, in August 1969, Hamish Keith, curator at the ACAG, wrote to Richard Palmer, administrative director of the Department of Circulating Exhibitions, to request exhibitions as the refurbishment of the ACAG was nearing completion.<sup>730</sup> Palmer was, however, no longer in this position, and there is no record of replies to either Keith's or White's letters.

The lack of progress from these enquiries was likely related to the difficulties that MoMA was then undergoing and the restructuring of the International Program. However, there would be greater success the following year. First, John Turner (then the photographer at the Dominion Museum in Wellington who, as noted in Chapter Three, had maintained a correspondence with MoMA staff), wrote to Rasmussen, to inquire about the availability of several photography exhibitions.<sup>731</sup> Then David Armitage, exhibitions officer at the ACAG, wrote to Richard Palmer to follow up on Keith's letter regarding exhibitions.<sup>732</sup> A. J. Thomas also restarted his correspondence with MoMA, writing on 22 June 1970 to inquire about exhibitions for the 1971 and 1972 Auckland Festival.<sup>733</sup> John Stringer replied to each of these; his letters to Thomas and Turner discussed MoMA's intention to tour an exhibition to New Zealand of the work of the photographer Brassai.<sup>734</sup> Stringer also wrote to Gordon White on 30 June 1970, copying in Gil Docking, director of the ACAG. Although I have not uncovered a copy of this letter, it is likely that Stringer mentioned the

---

<sup>727</sup> Thomas to Garson, 24 October 1968, *ibid.*

<sup>728</sup> Annette Allwardt, administrative assistant for the International Program, replied to Thomas on 28 May 1969 to inform him that the Lange exhibition would not be available for New Zealand at this time. *Ibid.*

<sup>729</sup> White to Rasmussen, 23 June 1969, *ibid.*

<sup>730</sup> Keith to Palmer, 26 August 1969, *ibid.*

<sup>731</sup> Turner wrote to Rasmussen on 14 February 1970 and again on 10 July 1970 when he received no reply. *Ibid.*

<sup>732</sup> Armitage to Palmer, 10 April 1970, IC/IP I.A.1937, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>733</sup> Thomas to the director, Department of Circulating Exhibitions, 22 June 1970, *ibid.*

<sup>734</sup> Stringer to Thomas, 30 June 1970, IC/IP I.A.1937; Stringer to Turner, 15 July 1970. IC/IP I.A.1938, MoMA Archives, NY.

International Program's plans in this part of the world. This is suggested by a letter from Stringer to Armitage at the ACAG, dated 7 July 1970, in which he wrote that he would keep him informed with regard to the *Brassai* exhibition as well as "any other exhibitions that are available for tour in Australasia."<sup>735</sup> This indicates that New Zealand was now firmly on MoMA's radar as part of its wider planning in the Australasian region, and I would argue that the continued efforts from New Zealand to maintain contact with MoMA over the previous two years were an important factor in this.

From this point, the key relationship that the International Program developed was with the ACAG. On 20 November 1970, Stringer forwarded to Docking the letter Rasmussen had sent to Eric Westbrook on 6 October 1970 that outlined the proposed exhibitions programme for Australia, along with a covering letter asking Docking to confirm whether the ACAG could take the exhibition *100 Master European Drawings*. Docking initially refused the offer via a telegram dated 4 December 1970, with a letter a few days later expressing his regrets and noting, "early next year, Auckland will need to vastly increase its exhibition budget allocation or we shall be poor country cousins. This will be a sorry situation as we will have the physical set-up to mount the best exhibitions offered."<sup>736</sup> Stringer acknowledged Docking's telegram in a letter dated 7 December 1970, and asked for input on the broader list of exhibitions:

Waldo Rasmussen is particularly anxious still to receive your comments on the tentative list of exhibitions proposed for Australasia in his October 6 letter to Eric Westbrook. We hope in particular that the DUBUFFET show may appeal to you in the light of past requests which we have had from Auckland for small exhibitions of modern masters. Should you have any further thoughts and suggestions, they are always most helpful to us in assessing our future programs.<sup>737</sup>

This letter is likely the first time that MoMA fully communicated to someone in New Zealand that this country, and the ACAG in particular, were a definitive part of its plans. Docking, unsure whether the ACAG would be able take advantage of this

---

<sup>735</sup> Stringer to Armitage, 7 July 1970, IC/IP I.A.1937, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>736</sup> Docking to Stringer, 4 December 1970; Docking to Stringer, 8 December 1970. IC/IP I.A.2025, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>737</sup> Stringer to Docking, 7 December 1970, IC/IP I.A.1937, MoMA Archives, NY.

opportunity, now set about looking for sources of funding. He directed his first inquiry to the US embassy in Wellington but, although the ambassador expressed interest in these exhibitions, he replied that the embassy would not be able to help in any way.<sup>738</sup> This refusal was probably based primarily on budget restrictions, but might also have related to the US embassy's involvement once again in its own art projects through the USIS, and the fact that the MoMA shows on offer primarily featured European, rather than American, art.

Docking, however, was also working on other options, and in February 1971 he presented his full case to the Auckland City Council, writing a letter to the town clerk that was discussed at that month's meeting of the Parks and Library Committee.<sup>739</sup> Docking stated that the ACAG had been offered a series of major exhibitions by MoMA's International Program, gave a breakdown of costs and provided information on the proposed programme. He wrote that in order for the ACAG to accept exhibitions from MoMA it would need to increase its budget allowance for special exhibitions from its current level of \$4,000 to around \$20,000. Docking suggested that this could be achieved in three possible ways: through an admission charge (which he had outlined in more detail in a separate letter to the town clerk dated 12 February 1971, also presented at this meeting); by securing a special annual grant of around \$15,000 from the Council's Improvement Trust Account; and/or by the allocation of more money from ACC revenue to exhibitions. In a major act of foresight that recognised the importance of MoMA's offer and its potential cultural benefits to the city, the Parks and Library Committee resolved to request from the Finance Committee an annual grant of \$25,000 for special exhibitions from the ACC's Improvement Trust Account.<sup>740</sup> As Docking later relayed to Stringer, the ACC decided to allocate \$15,000 annually for three years "to finance major exhibitions from New York," which he presented as specifically referring to exhibitions from MoMA's International Program.<sup>741</sup> As Docking further wrote, "We will regard MoMA exhibitions as being of first priority and will juggle our exhibitions itinerary to meet your requirements," adding that the ACAG could be flexible in programming

---

<sup>738</sup> Docking related this in a later letter to the ACC town clerk dated 2 February 1971. Minutes, ACC PLC, 23 February 1971, Attachment AB, Minute Book 1970, ACC 109, Item 13, AC Archives.

<sup>739</sup> Ibid.

<sup>740</sup> Ibid.

<sup>741</sup> Docking to Stringer, 25 March 1971, IC/IP I.A.2025, MoMA Archives, NY.

MoMA exhibitions to help the International Program in terms of its own planning.<sup>742</sup> Finally, it also meant that the ACAG would be able to take the exhibition *100 Master European Drawings*.

The arrangement with MoMA was a development of foremost significance, and led to the ACAG receiving five large-scale exhibitions from MoMA between 1971 and 1976. However, as demonstrated through its correspondence with A. J. Thomas of the Auckland Festival Society and John Turner, the International Program also wanted to tour other types of exhibitions to New Zealand. This interest was confirmed in a letter that John Stringer wrote to John Maynard at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery on 18 January 1971 to inform him of several potential exhibitions planned for Australasia. Maynard had left the GBAG by this point, but Robert Ballard, his replacement as director, replied to Stringer to express particular interest in two photography exhibitions, of works by Henri Cartier-Bresson and Dorothea Lange, and asked for further information on what might be available. Although tours of these particular exhibitions did not eventuate, between 1971 and 1974 MoMA sent five smaller exhibitions to New Zealand for wider distribution, three of photography and two of prints. These were more easily transportable and less expensive than the large-scale shows that went only to the ACAG, and came from MoMA's own holdings. Before examining these exhibitions in more depth, however, it is necessary to understand the wider political context of the International Program's renewed operations in Australasia.

#### Understanding the nature of the Australasian programme

As indicated by Waldo Rasmussen's letter to Eric Westbrook of 6 October 1970, the initial focus of the International Program's operations in Australia and New Zealand was exhibitions of modernist European art. This was a result of an important decision made in 1968. When Rasmussen presented the case for expanding the operations of the International Program in Australia in 1967 it was initially conceived in terms of American art. However, in October 1968, an ad hoc committee, made up of the officers of the International Council and the chairmen of its committees and sub-

---

<sup>742</sup> Ibid.

committees met with MoMA's curatorial staff for "an overall planning session to discuss some of the problems related to circulating exhibitions abroad."<sup>743</sup> The proposals from this were then discussed at a meeting of the Program and Executive Committees of the International Council, held on 13 November 1968. One of these ideas was that,

Instead of a general program policy of sending American art abroad, it was proposed that the Council emphasize exhibitions more truly international in character. Exhibitions of American art would continue to be circulated at the request of overseas museums.<sup>744</sup>

Further, as part of the discussion that developed, it was recorded that Rasmussen "felt it important to move away from the national view to a more international one."<sup>745</sup> As a result, at this meeting "it was agreed that the quality of the exhibition was of most importance and that American shows could be sent when it seemed relevant."<sup>746</sup> The matter was raised again at the 1968 annual meeting of the International Council, held on 25 November, as part of the report of its Program Committee. This "recommended that the program policy be changed to an emphasis on exhibitions which are more truly international in character."<sup>747</sup> It noted further that, while it would continue to send out shows of American art, there would now be a shift "from a rather nationalistic point of view to a greater internationalism."<sup>748</sup>

This was clearly a significant change that can first be related to the idea discussed in Chapter Three that Rasmussen was not as interested in utilising the International Program to promote American art as his predecessor Porter McCray had been. I would also argue that it was based in a desire to more firmly use International Program exhibitions to promote MoMA as an institution. As Rasmussen stated in his 1994 interview, he believed that the International Program "helped establish The Museum of Modern Art as one of the greatest museums in the world. It's helped to

---

<sup>743</sup> "Minutes of the Joint Meeting of the Program and Executive Committees of The International Council of the Museum of Modern Art," 13 November 1968, 4, IC/IP V.E.292, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>744</sup> Ibid.

<sup>745</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>746</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>747</sup> "Minutes of the Twelfth Annual Meeting of the Corporation of the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art, Inc.," 25 November 1968, 8, IC/IP IV.A.254, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>748</sup> Ibid.

develop international awareness of the Museum.”<sup>749</sup> Presenting international art through the Program demonstrated that MoMA was not just a repository of modern American art, and I would suggest that this was part of the broader project of identifying MoMA as *the* museum of modern art, one that effectively defined and designated what modern art was. As Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach argued in their important 1978 article “The Museum of Modern Art As Late Capitalist Ritual: An Iconographic Analysis”:

No other collection of modern art received such generous support and publicity for acquisitions, exhibitions, publications, and public relations. Increasingly, after World War II MOMA’s view of modern art achieved institutional hegemony in academic art history, art education, and the higher reaches of the gallery world and the art press. The image of the collection as the unique embodiment of modern art history remains established – that is, institutionally enforced.<sup>750</sup>

In other words, the activities of the International Program and Council functioned as another manifestation of MoMA’s efforts to promote its particular view of modern art history.

I would further contend, however, that the International Program’s decision to move away from the presentation of American art was also a response to the political context of the time, which had led to demonstrations that targeted American art and artists in Europe in 1968. First, this year was particularly momentous for international protest and an important factor within this was the deteriorating situation in Vietnam. At the end of January, the North Vietnamese had launched the Tet Offensive. The fighting that followed was extensively reported and televised both in the United States and overseas and shocked the American public and generated international outrage.<sup>751</sup> A second key aspect was the broader critique of capitalism and the its related institutions, with the protests that erupted in France in May of 1968 the clearest expression of this position. This dissent also came to encompass museums and

---

<sup>749</sup> Oral History Program, interview with Waldo Rasmussen, 1 November 1994, 50, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>750</sup> Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach, “The Museum of Modern Art As Late Capitalist Ritual: An Iconographic Analysis,” *Marxist Perspectives* 4 (Winter 1978): 33.

<sup>751</sup> Matthew Israel, *Kill for Peace: American Artists Against the Vietnam War* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013), 102-4.

galleries, the art market and the commercial functioning of the art world which commodified artistic output.<sup>752</sup>

An important example of how American art and artists were drawn into this is the protests relating to the exhibition *Minimal Art*. This show was conceived by Enno Develing, a research assistant at the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague. It featured an array of American artists associated with Minimalism and was the first exhibition of this art movement in Europe. Opening in March 1968 at the Gemeentemuseum, it travelled to the Stadtische Kunsthalle und Kunstverien in Düsseldorf and the Akademie der Künste in Berlin in 1969. At all these venues it was met with demonstrations. As James Meyer argues in relation to this, “Leftist activists in Holland and Germany viewed the new art as ‘American’ in a negative sense” and their actions were directed “at a perceived US military and cultural imperialism.”<sup>753</sup> However, he also notes that several of the artists in the exhibition were sympathetic to this viewpoint, most notably Carl Andre who made a button to wear at the opening in The Hague that asserted his opposition to the war in Vietnam.<sup>754</sup> Later, in June 1968, the Venice Biennale was briefly closed by student demonstrators in protests that were linked to the May 1968 events in France and to demonstrations that had taken place at the Milan Triennial, also in May. Although these were primarily focused on the institutions of the art world,<sup>755</sup> the American Pavilion was one site of protest, with students chanting “a litany of cult political icons, from Marx and Mao to Che Guevara and Ho Chi Minh.”<sup>756</sup> Similarly, another international art event, Documenta IV that opened in July in Kassel, Germany, also generated opposition that was directed at American art. The focus of this edition of Documenta was Op art and Minimal art, and out of the 150 artists involved, fifty-seven were from the United States. As recorded by Therese Schwartz, when European artists became aware of this, “they protested that Documenta was America-dominated and represented an ‘imperialist take-over.’”<sup>757</sup> Although, as Schwartz notes, this was a dispute in relation to the

---

<sup>752</sup> See Therese Schwartz, “The Politicization of the Avant-Garde,” *Art in America* 59, no.6 (November/December 1971): 96-105.

<sup>753</sup> James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Politics in the Sixties* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 263.

<sup>754</sup> *Ibid.*, and 315n83.

<sup>755</sup> Schwartz, “The Politicization of the Avant-Garde,” 104.

<sup>756</sup> Nicholas Cullinan, “From Vietnam to Fiat-nam: The Politics of Arte Povera,” *October* 124 (Spring 2008): 21.

<sup>757</sup> Schwartz, “The Politicization of the Avant-Garde,” 105.



workings of the art market,<sup>758</sup> it once more highlighted that American art was becoming a locus for expressions of dissent.

It is probable, then, that Rasmussen's idea to move towards a more international view, as expressed at the 13 November meeting of the Program and Executive Committees of the International Council, was related to the negative reception that American art had received in Europe in 1968. Coincidentally, the following day, the International Program's exhibition *The Art of the Real: U.S.A. 1948-1969* opened at the Grand Palais in Paris. As Meyer notes, this show, which subsequently toured to Zurich and London, "became a target of anti-American feeling."<sup>759</sup> This stance was in part a result of the promotion of Minimalism in the catalogue as a specifically American artistic development, which led to familiar accusations of cultural imperialism.<sup>760</sup> This reception may well have acted as further encouragement for the International Council and Program to adopt Rasmussen's suggestion.

In the same period, MoMA itself was also increasingly subject to criticism and became a site for demonstrations. There were two key issues here that were often intertwined: MoMA as an institution, and the museum and its patrons in relation to the Vietnam War. An early example occurred in 1967 when a group of artists organised a petition asking Picasso to remove his famous anti-war painting *Guernica* from MoMA, where the artist had entrusted it, as a protest against US involvement in Vietnam.<sup>761</sup> In January 1969 the Art Workers' Coalition (AWC) was formed, and this organisation played a major role in actions against MoMA. It soon presented a list of demands to MoMA regarding its operation, and in April 1969 it expanded its protests to incorporate the Vietnam War.<sup>762</sup> One major example was its approach to MoMA to co-sponsor an antiwar poster, the work *Q. And babies? A. And babies* (figure 46). However, when MoMA became aware of the contents of the work, it withdrew its support.<sup>763</sup> Prior to this, the museum had also been a site of anti-war protest when, on 18 November 1969 the Guerilla Art Action Group (a radical offshoot of the AWC),

---

<sup>758</sup> Ibid.

<sup>759</sup> Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Politics in the Sixties*, 256.

<sup>760</sup> Ibid., 259-60.

<sup>761</sup> See Israel, *Kill for Peace*, 77-78. This was not the first protest by American artists against the war, but it was the first involving MoMA.

<sup>762</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>763</sup> See *ibid.*, 132-34 for full details.

staged an action entitled *A Call for the Immediate Resignation of All the Rockefellers from the Board of Trustees of the Museum of Modern Art*. On that date, four members of the Guerilla Art Action Group fell to the floor of MoMA's lobby, writhing amidst two gallons of blood they had concealed on their persons in plastic bags. They scattered leaflets that accused the Rockefellers of "using art as a means of self-glorification and as a form of social acceptability" and as "a cover for their brutal involvement in all spheres of the war machine," and also pointed to the links between the Rockefellers and companies involved to different degrees in the war.<sup>764</sup>

MoMA was understandably sensitive about these actions and moved to internalise such critiques. The major example of this was the exhibition *Information*, curated by MoMA's Kynaston McShine, and held at that museum from 20 July to 20 September 1970. The catalogue included photographs of demonstrations as well as pictures of works such as *Q. And babies? A. And babies*, and the exhibition incorporated both anti-war works and Conceptual artworks that presented institutional critiques.<sup>765</sup> The most famous of these was Hans Haacke's *MoMA Poll* which asked visitors to cast a ballot in response to the following question about Nelson Rockefeller, who was a MoMA trustee and the governor of New York State seeking re-election:

Would the fact that Governor Rockefeller has not denounced President Nixon's Indochina policy be a reason for you not to vote for him in November?<sup>766</sup>

Rockefeller himself was understandably upset by this, but the museum felt that it was better to keep the piece in the exhibition rather than invite accusations of censorship.<sup>767</sup>

I would argue that incidents such as those described also motivated the International Program to depoliticise its activities by shifting to a more international emphasis, and

---

<sup>764</sup> Guerilla Art Action Group, *A Call for the Immediate Resignation of All the Rockefellers from the Board of Trustees of the Museum of Modern Art*, 10 November 1969, quoted in Israel, *Kill for Peace*, fig. 56, 140. For further details, see *ibid.*, 137-42.

<sup>765</sup> As Julia Bryan-Wilson notes, the inclusion of anti-war images "appeared to be a response on the part of the museum to the art workers' desire for art institutions to take a stand on the war." Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 190.

<sup>766</sup> Hans Haacke, *MoMA Poll*, 1970, quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>767</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

away from exhibitions that could become a target of protest, so as to avoid controversy. This, in turn, was part of the reason why the exhibitions that it initially sent to Australia and New Zealand were focused on modernist European art.

### International Program exhibitions in New Zealand

As indicated by the correspondence discussed earlier in this section, the first exhibition to come out to New Zealand from MoMA in the 1970s was *Brassai*. The artist was a photographer born in 1899 in the old Austro-Hungarian empire who made his name in Paris in the inter-war years. The show contained seventy-one photographs dating from 1932 to 1958 that primarily took that city as their subject. Arriving in New Zealand from Australia, it was displayed first at the ACAG for the 1971 Auckland Festival, then toured to the NAG and the GBAG, after which it travelled to Latin America. This was followed by a retrospective of the English photographer Bill Brandt that featured 125 photographs dating from 1934 to 1960. This went to the ACAG as part of the 1972 Auckland Festival and the ACAG then toured it to the GBAG and the Manawatu Art Gallery in Palmerston North, before it was sent to Australia.

MoMA next sent out *New Photography USA*, which was exhibited at the ACAG from 13 February to 11 March 1973 and then toured to the GBAG, Manawatu Art Gallery and the Waikato Art Museum. It consisted of 110 works by eleven photographers selected by John Szarkowski, director of MoMA's Department of Photography, who described the selection as "a personal view of what new photography in the USA is about at its best."<sup>768</sup> The artists in the show were Diane Arbus, Paul Caponigro, Bruce Davidson, Lee Friedlander, George Krause, Ray Metzker, Joel Meyerowitz, Naomi Savage, Art Sinasbaugh, Jerry Uelsmann and Garry Winogrand. *New Photography USA* demonstrates that the International Program had not completely stopped developing shows of American art, but it is significant that it was a photography exhibition. Typically, photography received less publicity and was therefore likely to generate less controversy. Regardless, from the New Zealand perspective, shown in succession with *Brassai* and *Bill Brandt*, *New*

---

<sup>768</sup> *New Photography USA* press release, February 1972, 1, IC/IP I.A.1908, MoMA Archives, NY.

*Photography USA* was important in the context of the development of New Zealand photography, helping to stimulate the increasing interest in this medium. For example, John Turner (who had been appointed as lecturer in photography at the Elam School of Fine Arts in 1971) recalls that he and Bob Hutchins (who also lectured at Elam) took students to view these exhibitions, which gave them first-hand exposure to a range of work by significant photographers.<sup>769</sup>

These exhibitions were followed by two of prints that helped to reinforce the continuing awareness of recent art trends in New Zealand. *Tamarind: Homage to Lithography* was displayed first at the GBAG from 9 to 23 October 1973. This institution then toured it around New Zealand after the ACAG had declined to do so. It went to the Gisborne Art Gallery and Museum, Manawatu Art Gallery, Waikato Art Museum, ACAG, New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts in Wellington, Dunedin Public Art Gallery and the Canterbury Society of Arts. Made up of one hundred lithographs from the Tamarind Lithography Workshop in Los Angeles, it featured works by a range of primarily American artists.<sup>770</sup> Subsequently, *Modern Art in Prints* came to New Zealand from Australia and was displayed first at the ACAG, from 14 October to 11 November 1973, then toured to the GBAG and the Waikato Art Museum. The show contained works by forty-five British, European and American artists dating from the 1940s to the 1970s, in styles ranging from Surrealism and Arte Povera to Abstract Expressionism, Neo-Dada and Pop art. This sequence of touring exhibitions served to keep MoMA and modern art, some of it American, in the public eye.

The first large-scale exhibition that MoMA's International Program sent out to the ACAG in this period was *From Cézanne Through Picasso: 100 Master Drawings*, exhibited in 1971, the show previously referred to in correspondence as *100 European Master Drawings*. Two of the other exhibitions mentioned by Waldo Rasmussen in his letter to Eric Westbrook dated 6 October 1970 would also be sent, *Surrealism* (1972) and *Picasso: Master Printmaker* (1973), although others, *Jean Dubuffet* and the exhibition of German Expressionism, would not. Subsequently, two further

---

<sup>769</sup> Turner, discussion.

<sup>770</sup> An accurate list of the artists displayed is not available. The catalogue prepared by the GBAG reproduced the list of artists from the original exhibition at MoMA but acknowledged that a number of these works were not in the touring show. Virginia Allen, *Tamarind: Homage to Lithography* (New Plymouth: Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, 1973), 2.

exhibitions were developed specifically for Australia and New Zealand: *Some Recent American Art* (1974) and *Fernand Léger* (1976).

Understandably, *From Cézanne Through Picasso: 100 Master Drawings* caused a great deal of excitement at the ACAG. As the exhibitions officer David Armitage wrote to John Stringer,

My colleagues and I have just recovered from reading the check-list of this show. We cannot really quite believe that it is true. As far as I am concerned, it must be the best show that this gallery has ever had and probably will have for some years to come.<sup>771</sup>

Featuring one hundred works by forty-seven European and Russian-born artists, this had been selected by William Lieberman, the director of the MoMA's Department of Painting and Sculpture. It consisted mainly of drawings, but also included five bronze head studies by Henri Matisse, an oil painting by Theo Van Doesburg and three watercolours by Paul Cézanne. Other artists represented were Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, Amedeo Modigliani, Alberto Giacometti, Constantin Brancusi, Marc Chagall, Georges Rouault, Pablo Picasso, André Derain, Juan Gris, Jacques Lipchitz, Kazimir Malevich and Fernand Léger. The works related to many of the major art movements of the early twentieth century, such as Cubism, Futurism and Surrealism, as well as different forms of abstraction. The exhibition travelled to Auckland from Japan, and was displayed at the ACAG from 7 September to 17 October 1971. It then went to Melbourne and Sydney before returning to New York via Honolulu and San Francisco. Although it was not conceived specifically with Australia and New Zealand in mind (as indicated in Rasmussen's letter to Westbrook dated 6 October 1970), that it did travel to both these countries as part of a very limited tour indicates that MoMA considered them to be an important target. In a letter to Stringer, Gil Docking reported that the exhibition was "a tremendous success here – as it should be – for without doubt it is the finest exhibition ever to be shown in New Zealand."<sup>772</sup> In this letter, too, he confirmed the ACAG's involvement in the next exhibition that MoMA was planning to send to this part of the world, *Surrealism*.

---

<sup>771</sup> Armitage to Stringer, 20 May 1971, IC/IP I.A.2025, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>772</sup> Docking to Stringer, 18 October 1971, John B. Hightower Papers, I.6.42, MoMA Archives, NY.

*Surrealism* was an exhibition that had been prepared as part of the International Program's operations in Latin America.<sup>773</sup> After touring several countries there, it travelled to Auckland, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide and back to New York via Mexico City. *Surrealism* was one of the major art movements represented in MoMA's collections.<sup>774</sup> As with *Cézanne through Picasso: 100 Master Drawings*, it was another example of the International Program's new focus on sending out exhibitions of international art. In its form in Auckland it consisted of over seventy works that included paintings, works on paper, collages and sculptures by artists such as Jean Arp, Hans Bellmer, André Breton, Giorgio de Chirico, Salvador Dali, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, Alberto Giacometti, Arshile Gorky, Hannah Hoch, Rene Magritte, Matta, Jean Miro, Pablo Picasso, Kurt Schwitters and Yves Tanguy.<sup>775</sup> It was exhibited at the ACAG from 18 July to 20 August 1972, not long after Richard Hirsch had taken over as director. Hirsch, who had lived in Paris in the late 1920s and early 1930s and had personally known a number of those involved in the Surrealist movement, contributed a foreword to the exhibition catalogue, which the ACAG designed for the Australasian tour.

*Surrealism* was one of the most successful shows ever held at the ACAG. In total, around 35,000 people visited it during its five week run. At that stage this was second only to the 1956 Henry Moore show, which had a recorded attendance of c. 36,000.<sup>776</sup> It received extensive newspaper coverage, no doubt because it was sponsored by the *New Zealand Herald* and the *Sunday Herald*, and this probably contributed to its success. There was some anticipation of controversy,<sup>777</sup> but this did not develop and, although much of the press coverage was concerned with the reactions of viewers to the exhibitions, overall this was a general sense of curiosity rather than outrage

---

<sup>773</sup> Oral History Program, interview with Waldo Rasmussen, 1 November 1994, 35, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>774</sup> As Waldo Rasmussen later noted, "Surrealism is *the* part of the painting and sculpture collection in which there are many more works than can ever be shown and you can do an absolutely first-rate show from the Museum collection and still have great pieces on the walls in New York." Ibid, 41.

<sup>775</sup> The contents of the exhibition for the Australasian leg of the tour were slightly different from the Latin American portion. Although most of the works were from MoMA's collections, there were some loans that had to be returned and other works were withdrawn, leading to various replacements. The complexities of this are outlined in a letter from Stringer to Hirsch dated 9 June 1972. IC/IP I.A. 2073, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>776</sup> "Rush to See Art Display," *NZH*, 21 August 1972.

<sup>777</sup> As Michael Dunn stated, "It is likely to be a controversial exhibition since the enigmas in these works will be new to many Aucklanders and will provoke heated debate." Dunn, *Weekender's Art News and Reviews*, *AS*, 10 June 1972.

(figure 47). For example, an article in the *New Zealand Herald* recorded that “most of the people approached for their impressions considered their visit to the exhibition well worth while [*sic*] even though there was much they did not understand.”<sup>778</sup> *Surrealism* was thus a landmark show that demonstrated the growing acceptance of modern art by the majority of the gallery-going public in Auckland.

The next major exhibition from MoMA to come to the ACAG was *Picasso: Master Printmaker*. This featured one hundred etchings, engravings, aquatints and linocuts from MoMA’s collection, dating from 1904 to 1968, and was based on an exhibition held there in October and November 1970. It travelled first to Colombia, then Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney before Auckland, after which it went to Argentina and Uruguay. At the ACAG it ran from 12 June to 15 July 1973, opening just over two months after Picasso’s death on 8 April 1973. As with previous MoMA shows it was well-received and, like *Surrealism*, had a good deal of press coverage as it too was sponsored by the *New Zealand Herald* and the *Sunday Herald*.

By this stage, however, with Hirsch in charge at the ACAG, the dialogue with MoMA had undergone a slight shift. Hirsch had spoken with Waldo Rasmussen in April 1972 during his time in New York prior to his arrival in Auckland regarding future exhibitions. Later he declined one of the exhibitions that MoMA had hoped to tour to New Zealand and Australia, *Four Masters of the Figure*, featuring the work of Francis Bacon, Jean Dubuffet, Alberto Giacometti and Willem de Kooning. I have not been able to ascertain why Hirsch refused this, although it is likely that it had something to do with the major show of French medieval art that the ACAG was in the process of securing.<sup>779</sup> When Peter Webb spoke with International Program officials during a visit to New York in October 1972, he based his inquiries on obtaining exhibitions to New Zealand that the ACAG specifically wanted. As he wrote to Hirsch, “I tried to persuade them to give us the shows we feel we need, rather than those that they have begun ‘feasibility studies’ on.”<sup>780</sup> Webb expressed the ACAG’s desire to obtain an exhibition of Cubism, leading to the International

---

<sup>778</sup> “Surrealist Art Interesting but Puzzling,” *NZH*, 24 July 1972.

<sup>779</sup> As Rasmussen subsequently wrote to Hirsch, expressing his disappointment that the ACAG could not take *Four Masters of the Figure*, “it is clear that you have made your judgment in terms of priorities, so we wish you well with your French exhibition.” Rasmussen to Hirsch, 18 September 1972, IC/IP I.A.2073, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>780</sup> Webb to Hirsch, 12 October 1972, Information Files, HS 04/73, AAG Archives.

Program's offer of a Fernand Léger show, and he also inquired about an Italian Futurist show, which received a positive response.<sup>781</sup> MoMA, in turn, offered the ACAG two shows of contemporary American art. As noted, although the International Program had decided to concentrate on distributing exhibitions of international art, it had also signalled that it would send out exhibitions of American art when requested. One of these was of Pop art, which had been asked for by Latin American art museums, and the other was of Minimal art, which is the first reference I have uncovered to the exhibition that would become *Some Recent American Art*.

### ***Some Recent American Art***

This exhibition, toured to Australia and New Zealand in 1974, was significant for several reasons. It was the largest show of American art to tour to New Zealand since *Contemporary American Painting from the James A. Michener Collection* in 1965. It was also the first large-scale exhibition of American art sent out to Australasia by MoMA's International Program since *Two Decades of American Painting* in 1967 (which had not come to New Zealand). The exhibition featured works by a range of important avant-garde artists whose art had not previously been seen in this part of the world. Significantly, too, the period covered by the exhibition was the past decade, a contentious time of political dissent and social upheaval in the United States.

#### The development of the exhibition

Although full details behind the origins of this exhibition are not on record, that the idea originated in Australia is suggested by Rasmussen's preface to the exhibition catalogue in which he wrote of MoMA's "appreciation of the hospitality of the Australian art galleries in inviting [the exhibition]."<sup>782</sup> I would suggest that, given that the NGV was responsible for most of the arrangements from the Australian end, it was this institution that initiated the request, probably at some point in the second half of 1972. The first mention I have found is Peter Webb's letter to Richard Hirsch dated

---

<sup>781</sup> Coincidentally, Australia had requested a Cubism show around the same time, but, as Rasmussen stated, "this is something that we are unable to cope with financially at the present estimated base expenses of the International Program. Loans would also be a major obstacle." Minutes, Program Sub-Committee for Australasia, 13 November 1972, np, IC/IP V.E.389, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>782</sup> Waldo Rasmussen, preface to *Some Recent American Art*, by Jennifer Licht (Melbourne: The National Gallery of Victoria, 1973), 8.



12 October 1972, and the earliest reference that I have located in the MoMA archives is a “Program Planning Sheet” for the exhibition prepared by John Stringer, dated 18 October 1972.<sup>783</sup> In this, Stringer acknowledged that a number of details needed to be worked out, although Jennifer Licht, associate curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture at MoMA, was already listed as the person responsible for the show, which had the preliminary title “Activities of the American Avant-Garde.” In terms of the contents, Stringer wrote that it would consist of around fifty works by contemporary American artists in a variety of media, likely ranging from large-scale sculptures to films.

A more detailed conception quickly took shape, as demonstrated by an exhibition proposal dated January 1973. This unattributed document noted the impact that *Two Decades of American Painting* had had on Australia and framed the proposed exhibition, now designated as *Some Recent American Art*, as a follow-up intended to present “more recent work which challenges many of the concepts of painting and sculpture.”<sup>784</sup> This proposal also put forward the idea of having artists travel to the exhibition venues, both to create works and to “add a dimension of personal communication and immediacy.”<sup>785</sup> This was described as “an essential aspect” because “the idea of the work of art assuming a form dependent upon its location, or of the act of execution constituting the work of art, are both important tendencies of recent art which can only be represented by the artist’s presence.”<sup>786</sup>

Another important facet of the development of *Some Recent American Art* was its funding, for the International Program recognised that it would be a difficult and expensive show to mount. This was because of the nature of the works and because MoMA’s collections in this area were limited, which necessitated securing loans from a range of sources. As a result, the International Program and Council sought various forms of financial assistance, and this had political implications. First, Rasmussen was not averse to seeking the support of the US government. As recounted by Stringer in a letter to one of the Australian members of the International Council, Rasmussen

---

<sup>783</sup> Stringer to David Vance, registrar at MoMA, 18 October 1972, IC/IP I.A.2293, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>784</sup> “Exhibition Proposal: Some Recent American Art,” January 1973, 2, IC/IP I.A.2291, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>785</sup> Ibid.

<sup>786</sup> Ibid.

had made a specific request to the State Department for help with *Some Recent American Art*, though the letter warned that “vibrations are not too promising,”<sup>787</sup> and no support would eventuate from this quarter.

The International Program and Council also sought sponsorship from private companies, with a particular focus on US companies with divisions or interests in Australia. For example, an approach was made to the tobacco company, Philip Morris, which was an obvious choice as it had already cultivated an association with contemporary art in Australia, having sent out exhibitions such as *Eleven Pop Artists – A New Image* that toured Australia in 1966. More specifically, as Stringer related in a letter to Rasmussen,

In view of the recent announcement of ‘The Philip Morris Arts Grant’ which will fund purchase of Australian works to the total of \$100,000.00 over a five year period, Mrs. Cullman [a member of the International Council] thought it would be appropriate if we again discussed with the company the prospects for a subsidy with SOME RECENT AMERICAN ART.<sup>788</sup>

As a result, on 30 April 1973, a discussion was held in New York regarding possible funding between Stringer, Licht, two members of the International Council and Frank Saunders, director of Corporate Relations for Philip Morris. The way in which Saunders thought the proposal should be framed for the Australian division of the company reveals the complexities of corporate and political relationships. As relayed by Stringer in a letter to Rasmussen,

Mr. Saunders feels that it may be untimely to emphasize the content or even the aims of our exhibition, and suggests that we approach the problem of finance from a strictly ‘political’ viewpoint. SOME RECENT AMERICAN ART may well be the first important foreign exhibition to come into Australia under the auspices of the new Labor government. The new government, in establishing seven new boards to deal with different aspects of culture within the general Arts Ministry, has expressed strong commitment. Early corporate support within this framework would doubtless place a company in a very favorable position in any future business negotiations with the government.<sup>789</sup>

---

<sup>787</sup> Stringer to Mrs John D. Lewis, 3 August 1973, IC/IP I.A.2320, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>788</sup> Stringer to Rasmussen, 3 May 1973, IC/IP I.A.2292, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>789</sup> Ibid.

Together with the International Program's willingness to approach the State Department for funding, this statement demonstrates that the International Program was certainly aware that its activities could have positive political implications and sought to take advantage of this, even as it claimed that it "organized exchanges in the visual arts with other nations on a non-political, institution-to-institution basis."<sup>790</sup>

As it eventuated, however, neither the State Department nor Philip Morris would be involved in funding the exhibition. Instead, Mr. and Mrs. Henry J. Heinz II, of the H. J. Heinz Company, would cover the US costs of the show,<sup>791</sup> the Visual Arts Board in Australia "supplied funds both in aid of the organization of the exhibition and towards the expenses of the Australian State Galleries,"<sup>792</sup> and the ACC paid the New Zealand costs.

### The selection

*Some Recent American Art* opened at the NGV on 12 February 1974, and travelled to Sydney, Adelaide and Perth before reaching the ACAG. The exhibition catalogue lists seventy-four works by twenty-one artists: Vito Acconci, Carl Andre, John Baldessari, Lynda Benglis, Mel Bochner, Dan Flavin, Eva Hesse, Robert Irwin, Donald Judd, Joseph Kosuth, Sol LeWitt, Brice Marden, Agnes Martin, Robert Morris, Bruce Nauman, Dorothea Rockburne, Robert Ryman, Richard Serra, Keith Sonnier, William Wegman and Lawrence Weiner. Several pieces were to be made on site by artists, with different artists going to each city on the itinerary. Andre, Irwin, Wegman and Yvonne Rainer travelled to Melbourne, where Andre created two works and Irwin one. The latter also held a discussion, Wegman presumably gave a talk, and Rainer, a choreographer and filmmaker who was not featured in the exhibition, presented a copy of her film, then in progress, "The Story of a Woman Who..." and the next day conducted a discussion.<sup>793</sup> Flavin and Rockburne made works in Sydney, where

---

<sup>790</sup> "Exhibition Proposal: Some Recent American Art," 1.

<sup>791</sup> The Heinzes gave 1,250 shares of H. J. Heinz Company stock to the International Council, with an approximate value of US\$58,000. Rasmussen to Mr. H. J. Heinz II, 9 January 1974, IC/IP I.A.2293, MoMA Archives, NY. The correspondence does not however, reveal, why the Heinzes made this contribution.

<sup>792</sup> Waldo Rasmussen, preface to *Some Recent American Art*, 9.

<sup>793</sup> Rasmussen provided details of the contributions by artists in Melbourne in a letter to Mr. and Mrs. Henry J. Heinz II dated 15 March 1974. IC/IP I.A.2293, MoMA Archives, NY.

Sonnier, Weiner and Wegman also visited. Judd went to Adelaide, Baldessari to Perth and Bochner, Irwin and the critic Lucy Lippard came to Auckland. Lippard's presence in Auckland was particularly significant. Not only was she a prominent critic who had championed Minimalism and Conceptual art, but she was a vocal activist against the Vietnam War and the policies of art institutions, including MoMA, in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

As had been laid out in the proposals for the show, the intention was to bring together works that reflected avant-garde practices in the United States from the previous ten years. Consequently, the earliest work dated from 1964 and most of the artists were relatively young, with the majority under forty-five at the time of the exhibition.<sup>794</sup> The works in the exhibition covered a range of media and materials; there were sculptures, paintings, drawings, documentary photographs, installations and videos. The artistic trends represented can broadly be defined as Minimalism and Conceptual art, with some examples of Process and Performance art. However, while these terms provide a useful frame for a brief overview, it is again important to recognise that the artists themselves often avoided defining their work in these ways, and that such terms are themselves quite fluid.<sup>795</sup> Moreover, they were definitions that Rasmussen and Licht shied away from in their discussion of the show, the former in his address at the inaugural opening in Melbourne and the latter in her catalogue introduction.<sup>796</sup> In examining the content of the show, my aim is again to give a broad sense of the range of works on display, with a focus on those by the best-known artists, as these were the ones that attracted the most attention.

First, the exhibition included works by three important painters of the period: Agnes Martin, Robert Ryman and Brice Marden. These artists were often associated with

---

<sup>794</sup> Agnes Martin, born 1912, was by far the oldest. The exhibition also included Eva Hesse, who had died in 1970 at the age of thirty-four.

<sup>795</sup> For example, as James Meyer notes: "All of the artists associated with Minimalism rejected the idea that theirs was a coherent movement; there was never a manifesto, they pointed out, only differing or even opposing points of view." Meyer, *Minimalism* (London: Phaidon, 2000), 16.

<sup>796</sup> Licht did not mention either of these terms in her introduction; Rasmussen chose to confront the issue directly, stating:

The terms 'minimal' and 'conceptual' are often applied to the works of the artists represented, and although I do not feel such general denominations are accurate or necessarily very helpful, they do suggest that many of the artists have gone outside the traditional concepts of the work of art, and in their explorations have been influenced by other disciplines.

Rasmussen, "Opening Address, Melbourne," undated, IC/IP I.A.2285, MoMA Archives, NY.

Minimalism because each chose to operate within a restricted mode, although their work also had expressive elements that distinguished it from the literalist approach that is a key feature of that movement. However, these painters received little attention from New Zealand critics, who were more interested in examples of Minimalist sculpture. This was one of the strengths of the show, with examples of the work of the five artists most often identified with Minimalism: Carl Andre, Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, Robert Morris and Sol LeWitt. Most of the sculptures reflected the key tenets associated with that term – simple, geometric forms, the use of ordinary, often industrial materials, and the idea that the work should only refer to itself, that is, “not allude to anything beyond its literal presence, or its existence in the physical world.”<sup>797</sup>

One of the most important works on display was Andre’s *Lever*, 1966 (figure 48), made up of 137 firebricks in a straight line on the ground. It utilises a commonly available object, unaltered, in a straightforward serial arrangement and demonstrates the importance of flatness to Andre’s practice in this period, an idea shared by his other works in the show. These were four floor pieces from 1969, each composed of thirty-six alternating squares (each roughly 1cm high by 30.5cm square) of two different metals that could be walked on by the viewer. Likewise, Judd’s four pieces reflected ideas that he expressed in his 1965 essay “Specific Objects” – the use of new industrial materials and an art made up of “a serial distribution of parts, ‘one thing after another’, that dictates the work’s organization in advance of its production.”<sup>798</sup> For example, *Untitled*, 1968 (figure 49), one of his stack works, features ten individual units of galvanised iron hung against a wall at intervals of 15.25cm, the same as the height of each unit. Morris was represented by works that demonstrated the evolution of his artistic practice. His Minimalist-related work in the show, *Untitled*, 1966, consists of four fibreglass polyhedrons painted grey, and reflected the fact that Morris’s approach to sculpture was different from that of Andre and Judd, with greater concern given to activating the space inhabited by the sculpture and engaging the viewer’s active participation. However, in the period covered by the exhibition, his practice developed in several other directions and the show included two other works that reflected this. *Untitled*, c. 1970 (figure 50) is one of Morris’s felt

---

<sup>797</sup> Meyer, *Minimalism*, 15.

<sup>798</sup> Donald Judd, “Specific Objects,” *Arts Yearbook* 8, 1965, quoted in *ibid.*, 26.

pieces and is representative of Process art in which the making of the work is paramount, rather than the end product. A rectangular piece with evenly distributed cuts that hangs on the wall with no predetermined arrangement, it reflected Morris's interest in utilising unconventional materials and in employing chance. The third work by Morris, entitled *Money*, is composed of correspondence between the artist and the Whitney Museum of American Art between 1969 and 1973. It challenged notions of the art market and the role of money within the art museum institution and can best be defined in terms of Conceptual art.

Two other sculptors who also built on ideas related to Minimalism were Eva Hesse and Richard Serra. The latter used simple forms and industrial materials in his two sculptures in the exhibition, *Prop* from 1968 (figure 51), which consists of two pieces in lead, a pole and a plate against a wall, and *One Ton Prop (House of Cards)*, 1973, four steel plates resting against each other on the floor. In both works, Serra's concern is with the relationship of object to environment, but he is also interested in the process of construction and on making known the essential properties of his materials, specifically their physical weight. Hesse's 1969 work *Contingent* (figure 52), which consists of eight hanging elements made of fibreglass and rubberized cheesecloth, utilises serialisation but is also organic in its form and conception, encapsulating movement and the idea of change.

With regard to those artists associated with Conceptual art, one of the most important was Joseph Kosuth. He was represented in the exhibition by three works from his 1966-67 series, *Titled (Art as Idea as Idea)*, photostats of dictionary definitions of adjectives and abstract nouns. The words defined in *Some Recent American Art* were "green," "visualization" and "radical" (figure 53). In this series, Kosuth rejected the physical object to instead concentrate on language with a clear philosophical intention. These works thus reflected some of the main characteristics of Conceptual art, which privileged the idea over the finished product and sought to dematerialise the art object, in part as a challenge to the commodification of art. John Baldessari's work in the show, *Throwing Three Balls in the Air to Get an Equilateral Triangle (Best of 36 Tries)*, 1972-73 (figure 54), is also concerned with documentation and seriality, but it is a more dynamic work that investigates questions of order and chaos, and is more aesthetically accessible. Significant, too, was the

inclusion of video works in the show, although these were little mentioned by New Zealand critics. Not only was video still a new medium that had become more accessible with the development of portable video cameras, but the selection on display included works depicting Performance art. This was a movement related to Conceptual art that had grown through the late 1960s and early 1970s. One important example here was Bruce Nauman's *Art Make Up: Black* from 1967-68. This was the last in a series in which the artist covered his face and upper body with make-up of different colours. In these,

Nauman metaphorically effaced himself as part of his investigation of 'withdrawal as an art form'.... Nauman used his own body as the surface on which pigment is spread, re-fashioning himself at each mutation into a new character, as if to play another role.<sup>799</sup>

#### Assessing the exhibition: historical and political contexts

As with other exhibitions that had been sent out from the United States to this point, *Some Recent American Art* lacked diversity in the selection of artists: there were only four women included and there were no artists of colour. In addition, there was a definite New York bias. Most of the artists worked out of that city, although there were several based in California, including John Baldessari, Robert Irwin and Bruce Nauman. Even so, it could be argued that the selection was an accurate reflection of the dominant trends of avant-garde art at the time, containing major names and significant artworks. Indeed, on these terms, as will be explored, it was welcomed by New Zealand artists. However, before considering the reception of *Some Recent American Art*, it is necessary to consider its relationship to the broader historical and political contexts of the period that it covered.

As noted, this was a particularly contentious and turbulent time in US history. Not only was it the era of the Vietnam War, which had only recently ended for the United States, at least in an official sense, with the signing of the Paris Peace Accords in January 1973, but it was also the period when other social issues, such as the civil rights movement and feminism, came to the fore. It is thus notable that there was a general lack of overtly political content in the selection of works. The closest

---

<sup>799</sup> Tracey Warr and Amelia Jones, *The Artist's Body* (London: Phaidon, 2000), 78.

examples were Kosuth's *Titled (Art as Idea as Idea) [radical]* and a video piece by Serra, entitled *Television Delivers People*. As noted, the former was a photostat defining the word "radical," while the latter was a video work consisting of a series of scrolling statements about the negative role of television in society, such as "popular entertainment is basically propaganda for the Status Quo."

Significantly, too, there was no discussion or acknowledgement of the wider historical contexts of the period covered by the show either by Rasmussen in his opening address or by Licht in her catalogue introduction. Both were rather concerned with presenting ways for viewers to approach the exhibition from a formalist standpoint. Thus Licht discussed the exhibition in relation to what it said about the development of avant-garde art practice in the period, writing about the attributes of the various types of art represented, although she avoided classifying the exhibition in terms of art movements. She instead explored how the pieces in the show, and the ideas they represented, challenged traditional views of art and extended the understanding of what art could be. The only acknowledgement of the wider political context in the catalogue was presented by Serra in his artist's statement, where the last paragraph reads,

Technology is a form of tool making (body extensions). Technology is not art – not invention. It is a simultaneous hope and hoax. It does not concern itself with the undefined, the inexplicable: it deals with the affirmation of its own making. Technology is what we do to the Black Panthers and the Vietnamese under the guise of advancement in a materialistic theology.<sup>800</sup>

However, the politics of the time were extremely important to the art produced in this period. Minimalist art practice in particular had a complex relationship with the politics of the Vietnam War, provoking a range of critiques at the time. First, it is noteworthy that several of the artists in *Some Recent American Art* had been involved in protests against the Vietnam War and/or art institutions, and this included key artists associated with Minimalism. For example, Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, Carl Andre and Sol LeWitt had all contributed works to an anti-war exhibition at the Paula Cooper Gallery in New York in October 1968, entitled *Benefit for the Student*

---

<sup>800</sup> Richard Serra, "Artist's Statement," in Licht, *Some Recent American Art*, 69.



*Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam*, curated by Lucy Lippard.<sup>801</sup> In addition, Carl Andre was one of the main figures in the AWC, discussed earlier, a group with which Sol LeWitt also had some involvement. And Robert Morris, who had steered clear of political activism in the 1960s, became one of the key people involved in the 1970 New York Art Strike Against Racism, War, and Repression. This demanded the closure of the five major museums in New York – the Metropolitan Museum of Art, MoMA, the Guggenheim, the Whitney and the New York Cultural Center. It represented the response of the New York art community to the US invasion of Cambodia at the end of April 1970 and the killing of student protestors at both Kent State and Jackson State universities by the National Guard in May of that year.<sup>802</sup>

From a formal standpoint, too, the artwork of these artists could be read, and critiqued, in relation to wider political considerations. As Barbara Rose wrote in 1969,

one might go so far as to interpret the current widespread use of standard units, ‘self-sufficient’ non-relational forms and non-hierarchical arrangements of equal members as a metaphor for relationships in an ideally level, non-stratified democratic society.<sup>803</sup>

At the same time, however, there were accusations that Minimalist art was not political enough, that it was too focused on formalist concerns and was “irresponsibly removing itself from the social tumult of the time.”<sup>804</sup> Minimalist artists also came in for criticism for their use of materials from companies that supplied the US military. For example, the 1969-70 MoMA show *Spaces* (also curated by Licht and featuring several artists associated with Minimalism), prompted a specific attack on Dan Flavin by the AWC. Flavin had used fluorescent lights donated and supplied by General Electric for his contributions to this show, a point explicitly recognised in the catalogue. In response to this, “the AWC sent a letter that accused him of

---

<sup>801</sup> See Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers*, 140-43.

<sup>802</sup> For full details of the Art Strike, see Israel, *Kill for Peace*, 147-55. As Israel records:

While the strike built on earlier Vietnam-era protest efforts...its roots could be found more in an unprecedented torrent of labor revolt across the United States, and even more prominently, in shutdowns of the Jewish Museum and the Whitney by contemporary artists, motivated by the invasion of Cambodia and societal repression, during the weeks preceding the Art Strike.

Ibid., 148

<sup>803</sup> Barbara Rose, “Problems of Criticism, V: The Politics of Art, Part II,” *Artforum* 7, no. 5 (January 1969): 45.

<sup>804</sup> Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers*, 77.

collaborating with the enemy by using GE-made materials. They demanded that he take responsibility for using products that they felt were directly implicated in the war they had united to end.”<sup>805</sup>

Finally, as noted earlier, the presentation of Minimalist art in the late 1960s in Europe had been associated with political issues. As Meyer argues, “The circulation of minimal art in Europe in 1968-69 had become a pretext for contesting US military policy at the height of the Vietnam war,”<sup>806</sup> and MoMA and the International Program had been implicated in this through its exhibition *The Art of the Real: USA 1948-1968*. This was to some extent a result of timing, but it was also related to the promotion of Minimalism as an artistic movement that had developed specifically in the United States. I would suggest that it was partly in response to this that Licht downplayed the nationalistic aspect of art implied by the exhibition title in her catalogue introduction. She instead emphasised internationalism and justified the focus on American art in the exhibition in purely practical terms:

Today, in an era of almost instantaneous intercommunication on a global scale, tracing generic distinctions is no longer as viable. The exchange and assimilation of ideas is so rapid and sophisticated that problems now revolve around international crosscurrents of style. Nonetheless, it is still appropriate to examine works of art under a national standard, though not for reasons of establishing their homogeneity and promoting them on the basis of distinguishable national traits, but as a matter of practicality.<sup>807</sup>

Although the International Program was evidently not interested in suppressing dissent, as shown by the inclusion of Serra’s artist’s statement in the catalogue, it was understandable that it would seek to underplay political issues, not least because of the scrutiny that had been directed at MoMA during the Vietnam War era. However, that these issues could not be ignored is emphasised by the reception of the show in Australia, and especially Adelaide, where the exhibition was criticised as a form of cultural imperialism, and by Lucy Lippard’s discussion of the show in Auckland.

---

<sup>805</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>806</sup> Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties*, 263.

<sup>807</sup> Jennifer Licht, introduction to *Some Recent American Art*, 10.

## Protests in Adelaide

In a report on the exhibition, MoMA recorded that, across its five showings,

Public reaction was very mixed: it ranged from a perception that the artists represented had shaped a new consciousness about art... to outrage and disgust that such ‘garbage’ could be displayed at all; that it was exhibited as art seemed to add insult to injury. For the most part, however, the exhibition generated curiosity, some confusion and a great deal of thought.<sup>808</sup>

What this did not acknowledge was that the exhibition had also generated political protests, particularly in Adelaide. In that city, leaflets were distributed that criticised modern art in general, and the art in the show specifically, as “vacuous and trivial,” and made connections between those critics in Australia who had written positively on the show, MoMA, and US corporate interests.<sup>809</sup> Further, the United States was defined as “the world’s main oppressor and principal danger” and calls were made for an art that served the people.<sup>810</sup> In addition, the Art Gallery of South Australia was picketed and an open forum to discuss the exhibition was organised by the South Australian branch of the Contemporary Art Society of Australia.

As a result of the controversy, the Contemporary Art Society also published a special issue of its *Broadsheet* magazine that contained articles both in support of and against these protests. These also demonstrated an important division within the protests, between those who criticised both the exhibition and the art on display, and those who criticised the exhibition in political terms but saw value in the art as art. The former view was represented by Brian Medlin, professor of philosophy at Flinders University and one of the driving forces behind the protests. His key criticisms were that the show was a form of cultural imperialism and that the art on display was a tool of corporate capitalism devoid of aesthetic value. As he stated, “We demand a different art. We demand a robust popular art that speaks from and to the real concerns of the world’s men and women.”<sup>811</sup> In response, Donald Brook, professor of fine arts at Flinders University and an important theorist of Post-Object

---

<sup>808</sup> Unattributed and undated document, IC/IP I.A.2288, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>809</sup> “Art or Imperialism: Humankind or Nihilism,” IC/IP I.A.2286, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>810</sup> Ibid.

<sup>811</sup> Brian Medlin, “Cultural Imperialism,” *CAS Broadsheet* 4, no. 3 (September 1974): 10.

art in Australia, endorsed Medlin's critique of the exhibition as a form of cultural imperialism, but questioned his dictate that artists should produce "a robust popular art," stating that

[the artist] should be free to put up models of that sort, or of any sort – and to have them subjected to criticism. To suppose that we have no more need of free imaginative invention such as is supplied conspicuously through the best of the arts is to suppose that we are already in possession of the definitive truth about the nature of mankind and womankind, and about the world, and only need to ensure its promulgation.<sup>812</sup>

Also included was a piece by Ian North, curator of paintings at the Art Gallery of South Australia, who robustly defended the exhibition. He pointed to the leftist political leaning of many artists in the show and argued that the accusation "that minimal and post-object art is promoted by capitalists as an opium of the people, is, generally, highly implausible" because the majority of people preferred realism in their art and, more broadly, because "art, and especially advanced art, is on the very periphery of the world of power, influence and politics."<sup>813</sup> He also declared that art should not be required to "frontally attack the world's problems to be worthy of consideration."<sup>814</sup>

This debate showed the conflicting opinions of different segments of the art community in Adelaide and the growing awareness of the various meanings that could be carried by exhibitions. Regardless of the merits of each argument, they demonstrated that political concerns could not be ignored. Even though the exhibition did not draw similar protests in Auckland, these issues would nevertheless be a factor in relation to both its presentation and its reception in that city.

### The presentation of *Some Recent American Art* in New Zealand

The International Program was very conscious about how the exhibition was displayed in each venue. With regard to its installation in Auckland, it began a dialogue with the ACAG several months prior to the arrival of the show. As part of

---

<sup>812</sup> Donald Brook, "Some Comments on 'Cultural Imperialism,'" *ibid.*, 14.

<sup>813</sup> Ian North, "A Reply to Protest," *ibid.*, 16.

<sup>814</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

this, on 11 July 1974, Peter Webb had sent John Stringer a floor plan of the gallery spaces with the works positioned.<sup>815</sup> A few days later Stringer wrote back with a revised plan worked out by himself and Jennifer Licht, noting that “as a principle, we prefer to keep pieces by a single artist grouped together and in sight of one another.”<sup>816</sup> He also pointed out that Webb had reversed one of the Donald Judd works on his plan, and that “to show the work as Judd had intended, there is really only one position where it can go in your gallery.”<sup>817</sup> In addition, one of MoMA’s registrars, Eric Rowilson, came to Auckland in advance to oversee the unpacking and installation of the works.

This American involvement in the installation process was something new. It can be related not just to the physical nature of a number of the works in the show, which required specialist knowledge to hang, but also to wider meanings of some of the works. For example, several of the works were specifically designed for the gallery context, their interaction with the surrounding space an integral part of their meaning. The result, as revealed by installation photographs, was a carefully curated show. The works were well spread out and spotlit, and primarily grouped by artist. For example, Donald Judd’s sculptures were all placed together (figure 55) and Carl Andre’s *Lever* ran alongside his four floor pieces (figure 56). Robert Morris’s felt piece was placed on the wall adjacent to the four polyhedrons of *Untitled*, 1966, which were given enough space to allow viewers to engage with the work (figure 57). This was a far cry from the presentation of earlier exhibitions such as *Painting from the Pacific*, and one that was in keeping with the formalist interpretation of the works in the catalogue. This did not, however, preclude at least one reinterpretation of the artworks. As related by Bruce Barber, at the opening, some visitors had used the fibreglass tubes of Eva Hesse’s *Accretion*, 1968, as swords, prompting the gallery staff to tape them to the wall to prevent this happening again.<sup>818</sup> Barber mentioned this to Lucy Lippard, noting that this “probably contravened the artist’s phenomenological intentions for the work to be subject to the gravity and perceivers’ movements within the gallery.”<sup>819</sup> Lippard agreed and the tape was subsequently removed.

---

<sup>815</sup> Webb to Stringer, 11 July 1974, IC/IP I.A.2302, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>816</sup> Stringer to Webb, 19 July 1974, *ibid.*

<sup>817</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>818</sup> Bruce Barber, e-mail message to the author, 21 March 2015.

<sup>819</sup> *Ibid.*

The International Program was also very concerned with providing visitors with a wider artistic context, as it recognised that the show was potentially difficult to understand. For example, Rowlison described the works in a newspaper article as “hard stuff to look at,” further stating, “They are a challenge to most people. But keep looking, these guys aren’t kidding. Their intents are serious. You have to learn the language first, and this is a visual language.”<sup>820</sup> To this end, the International Program supplied the ACAG with a range of books to be made available to the general public to help provide context.<sup>821</sup> This was also part of the reason why it sent out Lucy Lippard, Mel Bochner and Robert Irwin to accompany the show. Irwin created a piece specifically for the gallery – a silk curtain stretched at forty-five degrees that blocked off the entire end wall of one of the gallery spaces (visible in figure 55). Judging from photographs held by the Auckland Art Gallery, Bochner made at least three pebble sculptures on site (figure 58) and, as the artist Bruce Barber remembers, also “gave a slide talk and then focused upon his floor work in the exhibition.”<sup>822</sup> Lippard’s invitation was based on her position as an art critic who had engaged closely with the art movements on display. As Licht wrote to her, “We all think it would be super if you could go to give a lecture (or several) on contemporary art. As I mentioned before, you need not, of course, feel restricted to dealing with my exhibition selection.”<sup>823</sup> However, as noted, Lippard had a history of protest against MoMA, and in her lecture in Auckland she discussed the wider political context. Barber recalls that she looked at the women in the exhibition and her own position as an activist critic and writer, and an article by Wystan Curnow from the time related that she talked about the AWC and the relationship of recent art to the art market.<sup>824</sup> In addition, at the request of Ernest Smith, the recently appointed director of the ACAG, Lippard contributed a piece to an issue of the ACAG’s *Quarterly* dedicated exclusively to *Some Recent American Art*. This stands as the main evidence for Lippard’s efforts to draw the attention of New Zealand audiences to a wider range of issues that were not part of MoMA’s presentation.

---

<sup>820</sup> Michael Brett, “As the Man Says, ‘They’re Difficult,’ ” *The Auckland Diary*, AS, 16 October 1974.

<sup>821</sup> Stringer to Smith, 18 September 1974, IC/IP I.A.2302, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>822</sup> Barber, email.

<sup>823</sup> Licht to Lippard, 23 May 1974, IC/IP I.A.2294, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>824</sup> Wystan Curnow, “New Forms Depict Nothing,” *New Zealand Listener*, 11 January 1975, 19. Curnow wrote, “New York’s the centre of the capitalist institutionalisation of *avant-garde* art. And this misuse and its attendant isolation of art from its true public, upsets Lippard. Upsets artists, too.” *Ibid*.

Lippard began her article by discussing the problematic nature of exhibitions such as *Some Recent American Art* and their potentially negative effect on local art. Here she referenced the Australian art critic Terry Smith's recent article for *Artforum*, "The Provincialism Problem," which set forth the dangers of presenting artworks out of their original context.<sup>825</sup> Lippard also reflected on her initial reaction to *Some Recent American Art*, that it was a form of "cultural imperialism," and recognised that this was "a phrase often applied to this exhibition during its Australian tour."<sup>826</sup> She then expressed concerns about her own involvement, stating that she came to New Zealand

with mixed and guilty feelings because no matter how much I might learn from the trip (thereby better equipping myself to combat the manipulators), I am well aware how such a show can be and has been used for the wrong political ends above the heads and intentions of its participants.<sup>827</sup>

Here she cited Eva Cockroft's recent article in *Artforum*, "Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War," noting the connections that Cockroft had made between MoMA's International Program and the CIA, and her argument "that the more dissident the participant the more useful he or she can be 'as a propaganda weapon demonstrating the virtues of 'freedom of expression' in an 'open and free society'."<sup>828</sup> Lippard then wrote about her own role in protesting against the US government and New York museums, including MoMA, addressing further the issue of her involvement:

I was all too sensitive to my reversed position as an envoy to New Zealand for that same institution. It doesn't make me feel any better that the offer was preferred on the basis of my criticism rather than of my political record. I can hardly be proud that the two can be severed so easily.<sup>829</sup>

This, in turn, led her to discuss the position of several artists in the exhibition as "dissidents," noting that only Richard Serra had made this visible, through his video

---

<sup>825</sup> Terry Smith, "The Provincialism Problem," *Artforum* 13, no. 1 (September 1974): 54-59.

<sup>826</sup> Lucy R. Lippard, "Notes on Seeing Some Recent American Art in New Zealand," *Auckland City Art Gallery Quarterly* 59, [1974], 2.

<sup>827</sup> Ibid.

<sup>828</sup> Ibid.

<sup>829</sup> Ibid., 3.

work *Television Delivers People*.<sup>830</sup> To Lippard, this work not only provoked questions about entertainment but also “about the responsibility of artists toward the uses to which their work is put.”<sup>831</sup> To this end, she asked, “Is art totally extra-political? Are artists (and critics) more free from worry about how their products are used than corporations which manufacture napalm? Can art be used, or is art useless?”<sup>832</sup> These important questions get to the heart of Lippard’s concerns about the exhibition and, in a broader sense, the political role of art. Lippard’s last paragraph meditated on the issue of cultural exchange, which was one of the ways in which International Program exhibitions were promoted, and she argued that these should promote genuine dialogue. She concluded,

I hope that in the future, under the impetus of the esthetic and moral issues raised by ‘Some Recent American Art’, concerted efforts will be made on a less institutionalized basis, to further a more realistic and aware level of exchange. And I hope, contradictorily, that in the meantime these questions do not detract from the very real achievements of the artists whose work is being shown.<sup>833</sup>

Lippard’s discussion of the exhibition can be read as a response to the lack of overtly political art in the show, how the exhibition was presented from the MoMA perspective and the broader political implications of the art of the period. She sought to give New Zealand viewers an understanding of some of the wider contexts in which *Some Recent American Art*, and the artworks within it, operated. This was a perspective that was still not widely recognised in New Zealand, but nor was it completely absent.

### New Zealand responses to the exhibition

*Some Recent American Art* was displayed at the ACAG from 14 October to 17 November 1974 and was opened by the US ambassador, Armistead I. Selden Jr.

---

<sup>830</sup> Ibid. However, this work not on view in Auckland due to technical problems.

<sup>831</sup> Ibid.

<sup>832</sup> Ibid. The reference to napalm may have been inspired by one of the criticisms against the Rockefellers in the leaflet distributed by the Guerilla Art Action Group in their November 1969 protest in the MoMA foyer (see pages 210-11). This pointed out that the Standard Oil Corporation, in which the Rockefellers were majority shareholders, leased one of its plants to the United Technology Center for the specific purpose of manufacturing napalm.

<sup>833</sup> Ibid.



before an invited audience. As noted, it was significant as the largest exhibition of American art to come out to New Zealand since *Contemporary American Painting from the James A. Michener Collection* in 1965. However, it was not especially well-attended and was certainly not as popular as the other large-scale MoMA shows that had come to Auckland. The publicity report recorded an attendance of 3,758,<sup>834</sup> as opposed to the 35,000 that had attended *Surrealism*. This was likely due to the public's unfamiliarity with the artists in the show and to the personnel upheavals that had taken place at the ACAG, which meant that the show was not well-publicised. However, the critical response to the show was chiefly positive, with most critics seeking to engage seriously with the art on display and the ideas that it embodied.

Newspaper reviews recognised that the works in the show would be difficult for the majority of viewers to understand. For example, Hamish Keith began his article for the *Auckland Star* by calling it “the most challenging show to come here since... the 1956 Henry Moore collection,”<sup>835</sup> and James Ross introduced his piece for the *Sunday Herald* by noting that it had “caused minor controversy among a viewing public not used to the ‘sparseness’ of these recent art offerings.”<sup>836</sup> Consequently, reviewers made an effort to provide a broad understanding of the exhibition, with a discussion of some of the formal and aesthetic qualities of certain works. In his review for the *New Zealand Herald*, T. J. McNamara was primarily positive in his assessment, concluding, “overall, thanks to thoughtful juxtapositions by the gallery staff, the pieces interact with each other to produce considerable stimulus to those prepared to surrender themselves to the experience they provide.”<sup>837</sup> Ross also praised several of the sculptures, but was critical of the paintings, calling them “very dull and dispiriting and lacking any true originality.”<sup>838</sup> Keith stated that “there are pieces in this show which are extremely powerful – which enlarge our experience and turn on our imagination,” but he also felt that the exhibition suffered from being sterile and devoid of reference to the real world, stating that there was “no room for human sensuality, passion, anxiety and other possible contaminants.”<sup>839</sup> Keith, however,

---

<sup>834</sup> ACAG *Some Recent American Art* publicity report, IC/IP I.A. 2288, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>835</sup> Hamish Keith, “Lofty, Constipated Heights,” *Weekender Art News and Reviews, AS*, 19 October 1974.

<sup>836</sup> James Ross, “Concepts on Really Different Planes,” *Sunday Herald*, 3 November 1974.

<sup>837</sup> T. J. McNamara, “Stimulus in Unusual Art,” *NZH*, 15 October 1974.

<sup>838</sup> Ross, “Concepts on Really Different Planes.”

<sup>839</sup> Keith, “Lofty, Constipated Heights.”

offered more in-depth discussion than most, and was also the only New Zealand critic to place the exhibition within a broader political context:

if you accept that art is the product not only of artists but also of the society from which they come, it is difficult to visualize the society to which these artists belong – not one certainly torn by corruption in the highest of places, divided along lines of race and economic status, not one of dying cities and polluted air and water, and certainly not one responsible for the carnage in Indo-China.<sup>840</sup>

This viewpoint was no doubt related to Keith's own experiences in the United States during his trip there in 1967. I have found only one review of the show that treated the art as a scam perpetrated by artists on a gullible public. This was a piece in the *Auckland Star* by Noel Holmes, who called the exhibition "the greatest take in the history of New Zealand showbiz."<sup>841</sup> However, the newspaper juxtaposed this article with responses from Hamish Keith and Peter Bromhead. The latter, like Keith a former curator at the ACAG, advised, "View this exhibition in an intelligent manner – with an open mind free of traditional concepts of what art should or should not look like."<sup>842</sup>

In one of his letters to John Stringer, Ernest Smith had noted that "the press has been very favourable, if at times lacking understanding of the concepts of the work involved in the exhibition."<sup>843</sup> I would suggest that this was a factor in the decision to devote an issue of the ACAG's *Quarterly* to the exhibition, which allowed for a more nuanced discussion of the show. Along with Lippard's article, it included contributions by Alan Wright, a lecturer in art history at the University of Auckland, and Tim Garrity, librarian at the ACAG. Wright's piece focused on the immediate art historical context of the exhibition, discussing how Minimalism and Conceptual art had developed, and considering some of the key ideas that these embodied with reference to specific works in the show.<sup>844</sup> Garrity offered a more critical approach, presenting a wide-ranging critique of Minimalist and Conceptual art.<sup>845</sup> As part of this, he placed the art within a wider historical perspective making, for example,

---

<sup>840</sup> Ibid.

<sup>841</sup> Noel Holmes, "Whoever Dropped the Bricks is Art Fans' Guess," *AS*, 23 October 1974.

<sup>842</sup> Peter Bromhead, "As You Should View Art," *AS*, 23 October 1974.

<sup>843</sup> Smith to Stringer, 31 October 1974, IC/IP I.A.2302, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>844</sup> Alan Wright, "Some Recent American Art," *Auckland City Art Gallery Quarterly* 59, [1974], 4-11.

<sup>845</sup> T. Garrity, "Meditations on the Exhibition Some Recent American Art," *ibid.*, 12-14.

comparisons with Dada. He also questioned the concept of the dematerialisation of the art object, writing,

the fact that the works in this exhibition – some of them beautiful and exquisitely made – were crated up and sent here as if they were the crown jewels, when a technical adviser with a cheque book and a set of specifications in his pocket would have done, gives the lie to any claim on the part of artists that the art object is a thing of the past, or in any sense dead, dying, non-existent, unimportant, ‘dematerialized’ or valueless.<sup>846</sup>

He also offered a broad political evaluation of this type of art, expressing concern that it did not address wider social problems: “It is child’s play [*sic*] to ‘dematerialize’ the art object or art itself, while the more obvious targets, money, status and the ego, to say nothing of the universal empty stomach remains as intact as they ever were.”<sup>847</sup>

The critical responses to *Some Recent American Art* are indicative of the greater knowledge and engagement with current trends in art that had developed over the period investigated. In addition, the exhibition was of great interest to artists. As Ernest Smith relayed to John Stringer, it was “of particular interest to the students of the University of Auckland and other allied institutions” and that “on the whole it has been an extremely good eye opener to the younger as well as older practising artists who have all received the show enthusiastically.”<sup>848</sup> Here, too, Jim Allen recalls,

For those familiar with the art magazines coming into the country in the 70s, seeing the real thing was like pages of *Artforum* come to life. The diverse range of propositions presented there could be found in the work in this exhibition.... It was a full complement of leading figures.<sup>849</sup>

Artists were also quick to defend the show from some of the newspaper reactions. On 26 October 1974, artists Milan Mrkusich and Geoff Thornley and art dealer Petar Vuletic published a statement in the *Auckland Star* entitled “An Alternative View: Some Recent American Art” that may have been prompted by Noel Holmes’s article as well as Hamish Keith’s review. In this, Mrkusich, Thornley and Vuletic sought to explain the importance of the exhibition and meanings within it through a series of

---

<sup>846</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>847</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>848</sup> Smith to Stringer, 31 October 1974, IC/IP I.A.2302, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>849</sup> Jim Allen with Phil Dadson, “Elam in the ’70s,” in Porter, *Jim Allen: The Skin of Years*, 156n1.

short simple statements. The first of these read, “This exhibition is of art of simplicity, truth and clarity,” and the last, “It is a challenging exhibition of sincere, difficult art, serious in intent, and profound in experience.”<sup>850</sup>

In this regard, too, the development of Post-Object art provided an important local context. As related to me by Bruce Barber, a student at the Elam School of Fine Arts under Jim Allen at that time and a key figure in the Post-Object art movement, there was a good deal of knowledge about Minimalism and Conceptual art at Elam in the early 1970s. This was in part due to the presence of Adrian Hall and Kieran Lyons in that period, two British sculptors who came to Auckland as part of the visiting lecturer programme that Allen established following his return from his sabbatical. Both had studied at Yale University under such artists as Morris and Serra and were thus well-versed in the latest developments occurring in American art, which they were able to pass on directly to their students at Elam. Another important resource was the Elam library that had a good selection of books and magazines.<sup>851</sup> Moreover, according to Allen, Lucy Lippard’s *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object*, published in 1973, had “been read with great interest and discussed at length here in Auckland.”<sup>852</sup>

As a result, a number of artists in Auckland were not only familiar with the ideas being expressed in *Some Recent American Art* but were also exploring similar terrain in their own practice. Significantly, too, Lippard, Bochner and Irwin all engaged with artists during their stays and so became aware of their activities. As Barber states,

I would venture that all of the artists in residence including Mel Bochner, Robert Irwin and Lucy Lippard expressed surprise that we were so knowledgeable about contemporary US and European art, that New Zealand was not a colonial cultural outpost or intellectual backwater.<sup>853</sup>

Indeed, Lippard herself acknowledged this in her piece for the *ACAG Quarterly*, writing,

---

<sup>850</sup> M. Mrkusich, G. Thornley, P. Vuletic, “An Alternative View: Some Recent American Art,” *AS*, 26 October 1974.

<sup>851</sup> Barber, e-mail.

<sup>852</sup> Jim Allen with Phil Dadson, “Elam in the ’70s,” 155n1.

<sup>853</sup> Barber, email.

I was, rather condescendingly, amazed to discover how well-informed about, even familiar with this work were the New Zealand artists seeing it for the first time; much of the art being made in Auckland now either bypasses or is already extending the issues exposed here.<sup>854</sup>

As discussed, Lippard's presence had been important in providing a political context for the works in the show, and this aspect was something that caused concern for many New Zealand artists. As Barber remembers, "Lucy was aware of the concern about America's role in the war in Vietnam and that through ANZUS we were implicated, and this was also a concern for many of us."<sup>855</sup> However, it is significant that the show did not draw protests as it had in Australia. Barber recalls that artists in New Zealand "were not as 'knee jerk' in our linking of this exhibition with American Imperialism because it had some very challenging work," although he also records, "If the exhibition had only included Abstract Expressionist painting I think we would have been disappointed and this would have been a stimulant to protest."<sup>856</sup> Instead, as Allen relates, in talking with Lippard on issues such as cultural imperialism and the operation of MoMA's International Program, "the way forward turned on 'exchanges' as a way out of this dilemma," although he also notes that at that time this "hardly appeared as a feasible possibility."<sup>857</sup> This was also something that Lippard wrote about in the ACAG *Quarterly*, making it clear that her piece in this also functioned as a response to her experiences in New Zealand and her encounters with artists.

#### After Some Recent American Art

In 1975 the International Program toured a major show entitled *Modern Masters: Manet to Matisse* to Sydney and Melbourne, but not Auckland. In 1976, however, the ACAG received an exhibition of paintings by the French artist Fernand Léger that also went to Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne. As noted, this show stemmed from the ACAG's desire to have a major display of Cubist work. Consequently, it was accompanied by an extensive publicity campaign and there were high expectations that it would be popular with the public, with Ernest Smith stating that he hoped

---

<sup>854</sup> Lippard, "Some Recent American Art," 2.

<sup>855</sup> Barber, e-mail.

<sup>856</sup> Ibid.

<sup>857</sup> Jim Allen with Phil Dadson, "Elam in the '70s," 156n1.

30,000 people would see it.<sup>858</sup> However, although it received a better reception than *Some Recent American Art*, attracting a total paying attendance of 8,498, this was well short of what was anticipated and budgeted for.<sup>859</sup> As John Maynard, the former director of the GBAG who was now exhibitions officer at the ACAG, wrote to Waldo Rasmussen,

I must say how pleased we are with the Leger Exhibition although the attendances have been very poor. I suppose it is mainly due to the fact that such an exhibition demands a fairly sophisticated audience of which there is a limit in a small city like Auckland.<sup>860</sup>

In response, Rasmussen expressed his sympathy, and also wrote

we have all been very impressed by Auckland's handling of the exhibition and are especially grateful for all the personal care you devoted to the show. We hope very much to be able to collaborate with you on another important exhibition in the near future.<sup>861</sup>

However, this would not happen, and the last MoMA exhibition to tour to New Zealand was a small-scale show of works by the American photographer Lee Friedlander in 1977.<sup>862</sup> The reason for the end of this relationship were tied to Australia. At the 1978 spring meeting of the International Council a representative from the Australian Gallery Directors Council spoke of the Australian desire "to be more independent and to feel less dependent upon New York – and specifically the Museum of Modern Art."<sup>863</sup> As New Zealand's participation had invariably been linked to Australia's, this signalled a demise of the relationship for that country too. At a subsequent meeting of the International Council's Program Subcommittee for Australasia, held in New York on 30 October 1978, Rasmussen argued for a hiatus of the International Program's activities in this part of the world;<sup>864</sup> and although it would again send out exhibitions to Australia in the 1980s, it would not rekindle its relationship with New Zealand.

---

<sup>858</sup> "Leger Exhibition a Good Draw," *NZH*, 7 September 1976.

<sup>859</sup> John Maynard to Waldo Rasmussen, 5 October 1976, IC/IP I.A.2513, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>860</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>861</sup> Rasmussen to Maynard, 4 January 1976, IC/IP I.A.2513, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>862</sup> I can only verify that in New Zealand this was displayed at the RMAG.

<sup>863</sup> "Meeting of the Program Subcommittee for Australasia International Council of the Museum of Modern Art," 30 October 1978, 14, IC/IP V.B.3, MoMA Archives, NY.

<sup>864</sup> *Ibid.*

## Conclusion

The Museum of Modern Art's International Program had been the main supplier of overseas exhibitions to New Zealand in the first half of the 1970s, particularly to the Auckland City Art Gallery. The curtailment and then termination of its programme was therefore of great significance, taking away what had been New Zealand's major source of exhibitions of both international and American art. Combined with the fact that the United States Information Service in New Zealand stopped bringing in shows after 1976, this meant that the onus was on New Zealand institutions to continue interactions. Here, it was the ACAG that remained the most proactive public art gallery through the second half of the 1970s.

From 1974, the ACAG steadily increased its holdings of American art, demonstrating the continuing importance that it placed on it. In the period through to 1980 it acquired around seventy-five works, mainly recent prints. In 1975, it took on loan from MoMA the Alexander Calder sculpture *Sandy's Butterfly*, 1964, for two years.<sup>865</sup> It also organised several exhibitions containing American art. In 1976 it put together the *First Pan Pacific Biennale: Colour Photography and its Derivatives* that featured artists from New Zealand, Japan, Australia and the United States. In 1978 it mounted a show of graphic works by Ed Ruscha that subsequently toured to the Robert MacDougall Art Gallery. It was also responsible for the New Zealand tour of a retrospective of the photographer Diane Arbus that opened in Auckland in December 1978, then travelled to the RMAG, Dowse Gallery in Lower Hutt, National Art Gallery, Manawatu Art Gallery, Sarjeant Art Gallery and finally the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery. It is notable that these exhibitions came about largely through personal contacts rather than depending on US institutions. The *Pan Pacific Biennale* was arranged directly with the artists involved, and the Ruscha show resulted from correspondence between the artist and Andrew Bogle, the ACAG's curator of prints and drawings. The Arbus exhibition was a retrospective that had been put together by the artist's estate. It travelled first to Tokyo, in 1973, then to London, various cities in Europe, and Australia. During its display in Australia, in October 1977, Bogle had

---

<sup>865</sup> This was the result of an inquiry made by Ernest Smith, the director of the ACAG to Eric Rowilson, the registrar at MoMA who had accompanied *Some Recent American Art*. Smith to John Stringer, 31 October 1974, IC/IP I.A. 2302, MoMA Archives, NY.

made an enquiry to the Australia Council for the Arts,<sup>866</sup> and this led to New Zealand being added to the itinerary.

The other New Zealand public art galleries, however, were generally not active in organising exhibitions, although they continued to host exhibitions of American art. The RMAG did organise an exhibition of works by the American printmaker Gabor Peterdi in 1978 that it toured to galleries in the South Island, but this was an exception. The GBAG, which had been so active in the first half of the 1970s, no longer looked to source exhibitions from the United States following the departure of Robert Ballard at the beginning of 1975. On the other hand, dealer galleries in New Zealand played a role in bringing in shows from the United States, at least for a brief period in the mid-1970s. Barrington Gallery, with the former ACAG exhibitions officer, Peter Webb, as its director, sourced and toured at least two exhibitions of American art with the aid of funding from the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council. *Photo Realism: American Paintings and Prints* came from a private dealer gallery in New York, the Louis K. Meisel Gallery, and Barrington Gallery toured this to the public art galleries in Christchurch, Wellington, Dunedin, New Plymouth and Hamilton, from September 1975 to February 1976. Also in 1976 it toured a show of photographs by Edward Weston, organised through his son, Cole Weston, to Palmerston North, Christchurch, Hamilton, New Plymouth and Wellington. In a similar vein, in 1975 the John Leech Gallery displayed a show of prints by the American artist, Lee Adler, which it then sent to the Academy of Fine Arts in Wellington and the Dunedin Public Art Gallery. These exhibitions were commercial ventures, with works for sale. The QEIIAC, apart from providing subsidies for such exhibitions, also continued to be an important source of funds for individuals looking to visit the United States. For example, both Gretchen Albrecht and Dick Frizzell used QEIIAC grants to travel there in 1978.

Interest in American art thus clearly continued. But from the mid-1970s there was a decline in art-related interactions and encounters between New Zealand and the United States, either derived from, or backed by, institutions or government bodies.

---

<sup>866</sup> Bogle to the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council in Sydney on 28 October 1977, MU000006/007/0006, Te Papa Archives.



Moreover, those that did occur did not have the same impact as the exhibitions and visits examined in this thesis.

Art-related interactions between New Zealand and the United States began to increase from the mid-1950s, and this thesis has reconstructed the most important of these. It has provided greater insight into several interactions that have previously received some attention – such as Colin McCahon’s 1958 trip to the United States and the exhibition *Painting from the Pacific* – and demonstrated the significance of others that have only been mentioned in passing in earlier literature. These include Dr. Grace McCann Morley’s 1956 visit to New Zealand and the exhibitions *Eight American Artists*, *Contemporary American Painting from the James A. Michener Collection*, *The State of California Painting* and *Some Recent American Art*. These were of major importance in exposing New Zealanders to various forms of art, especially modern American art. They played a central role in what was a formative period in the development of the New Zealand art scene, and the processes through which New Zealand became part of a globalised art world. In addition, in exploring these various visits and exhibitions, I have argued for the crucial relationship between such interactions and wider historical and political contexts. World War II was an important catalyst for the development of closer relations between the United States and New Zealand. Subsequently, in the period investigated, the two countries were allies in two major conflicts, the Cold War and the Vietnam War.

The advent of World War II marked a significant turning point both in the relationship between New Zealand and the United States and in New Zealand’s conception of itself. In the aftermath of that conflict, New Zealand began to shift away from its traditional links with Great Britain and looked towards the United States as the guarantor of its security, and it also became increasingly conscious of its identity as a Pacific nation. For the United States, New Zealand was a useful Cold War ally, and this thesis has connected the increase in art-related interactions between the two countries to the desire of the US government, as part of its Cold War strategy, to promote the United States culturally to combat negative Soviet characterisations of it. The US information programme in New Zealand, established during World War II, was central to this. It was through the USIS branch in Wellington that, for example, Dr. Morley visited New Zealand, and the exhibition *Eight American Artists* toured to

the NAG and ACAG, the first display of original examples of modern American art to come to New Zealand.

Although the role of the USIS soon diminished, other US bodies, such as the Carnegie Corporation of New York, through its Commonwealth travel grant programme, and MoMA, through its International Program, played a similar role, with the same goal of presenting the United States in a positive light within the context of the Cold War. MoMA's International Program had a particularly complex relationship to politics. While its origins lay in the Cold War, in the period examined its purpose shifted, although promoting the United States culturally was always an aspect of its operations. From the later 1960s, however, its activities came under increasing scrutiny, and became associated negatively with the Vietnam War and the idea of US cultural imperialism. This affected the character of the exhibitions it sent out to New Zealand (and Australia) in the early 1970s, as demonstrated by its decision to focus on shows of modernist European art, then the way it presented *Some Recent American Art*. For individual New Zealanders, especially those who travelled to the United States, the Vietnam War was a significant event affecting their attitudes and activities. The conflict also led to some degree of protest against exhibitions toured by the USIS in the early 1970s and was a factor in the reception of *Some Recent American Art*.

In a more general sense, the interactions and encounters discussed in this thesis were part of the global spread of American art after World War II, and this was by no means purely political. Although the US government used art as part of its Cold War propaganda strategy, there was also a desire amongst the American art community to spread knowledge about recent developments in American art. This had been the other main motivation behind the development of MoMA's International Program and the CCNY's activities, and was the primary reason behind the tour to New Zealand in 1965 of the exhibition *Contemporary American Painting from the James A. Michener Collection*. Yet while the promotion of its art was important, such interactions were not simply imposed by the United States.

New Zealanders and New Zealand institutions looked to the United States as a source of inspiration and actively sought, solicited and even organised artistic

exchanges. Research into these operations has shed light on New Zealand post-war developments in the arts. The ACAG emerges as New Zealand's most important and proactive institution in this, joined by the GBAG in the early 1970s. Their contributions in exposing New Zealanders to modern art, and specifically modern American art, were of great value during this formative period. In addition, new art bodies such as the Arts Advisory Council and later the QEIIAC were important in providing grants that facilitated interactions. The QEIIAC also played a role in developing contact with MoMA's International Program in the mid-1960s.

Individuals, too, were significant in these efforts, and in developing relationships with US institutions. Peter Tomory stands out most clearly here, both as the director of the ACAG from 1956 to 1965, and then as exhibitions officer for the QEIIAC from 1964 to 1967. However, other ACAG directors, Eric Westbrook and Gil Docking, and staff members Colin McCahon, Hamish Keith, David Armitage and Peter Webb, were also significant, as was the GBAG's Californian director, Robert Ballard, in the early 1970s. In addition, individual interactions, such as the American trips of Colin McCahon, John Coley and Jim Allen, had major repercussions both on a personal level and on the New Zealand art scene in general. It must be recognised, too, that New Zealand benefited from Australian efforts; the Michener exhibition was originally sent out to Australia as a result of the desire of Australian art gallery directors to display modern American art, and Clement Greenberg's 1968 visit to New Zealand also had its origins in Australia. In addition, the relationship that developed with MoMA's International Program first in the mid-1960s and then in the early 1970s related to that institution's interest in Australia.

It is also important to acknowledge how both wider cultural trends and individual sensibilities shaped interactions and their impacts. A clear example of this is the interest that developed in West Coast American art. First, in a broad sense it is possible to relate this to New Zealand's changing notion of itself as a Pacific nation, and one that was increasingly aligning itself to the United States politically. More specifically, it was related to Tomory's regionalist view of art and to McCahon's time in the United States. It was the catalyst for two exhibitions organised by the ACAG in the early 1960s, *Painting from the Pacific* and *Drawings from West Coast USA*, and remained a touchstone for the reception of the 1971 show *Pacific Cities Loans*

*Exhibition* at the ACAG and the 1972 exhibition *The State of California Painting*. This interest in West Coast art stands in contrast to the more common focus on art from New York. It demonstrates that it was not just art from that city that was sought out and displayed as part of the global spread of American art.

While the impact of US interactions on New Zealand has been the chief focus of this thesis, it also sheds new light on both the US information programme and art institutions in the United States. The examination of the USIS in New Zealand adds to the understanding of the use of art by the US information programme, and the importance of the local USIS branch in framing its activities, often ad hoc in nature and with limited direction or support from Washington. My research has also revealed something of the continuing contribution of the CCNY to cultural developments in the British dominions, and how MoMA's International Program became involved in the wider Pacific as the key supplier of art exhibitions to New Zealand in the 1970s.

To conclude, art-related interactions and encounters were part of a general cultural shift in New Zealand towards the United States following the Second World War. They were derived from a complex interplay of factors, including political demands, and both institutional and individual efforts, goals and relationships. Moreover, they were often interrelated, with a multifaceted range of impacts and implications. Informing and informed by wider contexts, they add to the understanding of what was a formative period both in the development of the artistic scene in New Zealand and in the wider relationship between New Zealand and the United States.

## Bibliography

### Unpublished Sources

#### Australia

##### Melbourne

- National Gallery of Victoria Archives  
Exhibition Officer Boxes

##### Sydney

- The Research Library and Archive, Art Gallery of New South Wales  
Historical and Administrative Records

#### New Zealand

##### Auckland

- Auckland Council Archives  
Auckland City Council Library Committee Minute books  
Auckland City Council Parks and Libraries Committee Minute books  
Auckland City Council Social Welfare and Cultural Activities  
Committee  
Minute books  
Town Clerk's Department Subject Files
- E. H. McCormick Research Library, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
Series: Information Files  
Series: Exhibition Files  
Artists Files
- Special Collections. University of Auckland Libraries and Learning  
Services.  
Records of the University of Auckland Centre for Continuing  
Education

##### Christchurch

- Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu Archives  
Exhibitions Files  
Press Clippings Books  
Robert McDougall Art Gallery Archive
- Christchurch City Council Archives  
Christchurch City Council Minute Books
- MacMillan Brown Library, University of Canterbury, Christchurch  
The Baverstock Papers  
Notes Relating to the History of the School of Fine Arts

##### Dunedin

- Dunedin City Council Archives  
Dunedin Public Art Gallery Archives
- Hocken Collections Archives, University of Otago, Dunedin  
Charles Brasch Papers  
Minutes and related papers concerning the QEIIAC VAC

## New Plymouth

- New Plymouth District Council  
Govett-Brewster Art Gallery Archives

## Wellington

- Archives New Zealand  
Agency: Department of External Affairs  
Agency: Department of Internal Affairs  
Agency: Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council
- Te Papa Archives, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa  
AGMANZ Archives  
Exhibition Files, National Art Gallery, 1936-72.

## United States

### Allentown, Pennsylvania

- Allentown Art Museum Archives  
James A. Michener Collection

### Austin, Texas

- Archives of the Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin

### Berkeley, California

- Morley, Grace L. McCann. *Art, Artists, Museums, and the San Francisco Museum of Art*. Typescript of an oral history conducted 1960 by Suzanne B. Riess. Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1960, viii, 246 p.

### College Park, Maryland

- National Archives and Records Administration  
Record Group 59: General Records of the Department of State  
Record Group 84: Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State  
Record Group 306: Records of the US Information Agency

### New York

- Carnegie Corporation of New York Records, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries  
Series I: Administrative Records, 1872-1996  
Series III: Grants  
Series VIII: Printed Material
- Museum of Modern Art Archives  
International Council and International Program Records  
John B. Hightower Papers  
Monroe Wheeler Papers  
Oral History Program, interview with Waldo Rasmussen, 1 November 1994

## San Francisco

- San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Research Library  
Office of the Director, 1935-58, Administrative Records

## Seattle

- Special Collections. University of Washington Libraries.  
Seattle Art Museum Records, 1913-1985

## Washington, DC

- Smithsonian Institution Archives  
Smithsonian Institution, Traveling Exhibition Service, Records 1952-1981

### Published Sources

- Abstract Watercolours by 14 Americans*. [Australia: 1965]. Exhibition catalogue.  
*AFA: A Century in the Arts*. New York: American Federation of the Arts, 2010.  
Accessed 24 June 2014.  
<http://www.afaweb.org/publications/documents/finalcomplete.pdf>.
- Albright, Thomas. *Art in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1945-1980: An Illustrated History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.
- Allan, Ken D., Lucy Bradnock and Lisa Turvey. "FOR PEOPLE WHO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE: Defining the Pop Art Sixties." In *Pacific Standard Time: Los Angeles Art 1945-1980*, 124-85.
- Allen, Jim, and Wystan Curnow, eds. *New Art: Some Recent New Zealand Sculpture and Post-Object Art*. Auckland: Heinemann, 1976.
- Allen, Jim with Phil Dadson. "Elam in the '70s." In Porter, *Jim Allen: Years*, 148-57.
- Allen, Jim with Tony Green. "1968 Research." In Porter, *Jim Allen: The Skin of Years*, 101-19.
- Allen, Virginia. *Tamarind: Homage to Lithography*. New Plymouth: Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, 1973. Exhibition catalogue.
- Allentown Art Museum. *The James A. Michener Foundation Collection*. Allentown, PA: Allentown Art Museum, 1963. Exhibition catalogue.
- Anderson, David L. *The Columbia History of the Vietnam War*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.
- Andrews, Robert Hardy. "The Man Who Invented John Wayne." *New Zealand Listener*. 8 March 1971, 2-3.
- Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives, 1957-1975*.
- Artspace, and Govett-Brewster Art Gallery. *Action Replay: Post-Script*. Auckland: Artspace, 2002.
- Auckland City Art Gallery. *Contemporary American Painting from the James A. Michener Collection*. Auckland: Wakefield Press Limited, 1965. Exhibition catalogue.
- . *Drawings from West Coast U.S.A.* [Auckland: Auckland City Art Gallery, 1962]. Exhibition catalogue.
- . *International Prints*. [Auckland: Auckland City Art Gallery, 1961]. Exhibition catalogue.
- . *Pacific Cities Loan Exhibition*. Auckland: Auckland City Art Gallery, 1971. Exhibition catalogue.

- . *Morris Louis*. Auckland: Auckland City Art Gallery, 1971. Exhibition catalogue.
- . *Painting from the Pacific: Japan, America, Australia, New Zealand*. Auckland: Pelorus Press, 1961. Exhibition catalogue.
- . *Surrealism*. Auckland: Auckland City Art Gallery, 1973. Exhibition catalogue.
- Ballard, Robert. Foreword to *The State of California Painting*, by Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, [2].
- Bancroft, Ria. "Reflections on the Visit of Mr Clement Greenberg." *Canterbury Society of Arts News* 21, September 1968, [2-3].
- Barañano, Kosme de, and Matthias Bärmann, eds. *Mark Tobey*. Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, 1997. Exhibition catalogue.
- Barr, Jim, and Mary Barr. *When Art Hits the Headlines: A Survey of Controversial Art in New Zealand*. Wellington: National Art Gallery in association with the Evening Post, 1987. Exhibition catalogue.
- Barton, Christina. *Billy Apple®: A Life in Parts*. Auckland: Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 2015. Exhibition catalogue.
- . "Post-Object Art in New Zealand 1969-1979." Master's thesis, University of Auckland, 1987.
- Barton, Christina, Tyler Cann and Mercedes Vicente, eds. *Points of Contact: Jim Allen, Len Lye, Hélio Oiticica*. New Plymouth: Govett Brewster Art Gallery, 2011.
- Barton, Christina, Robert Leonard, with Thomasin Sleight, eds. *The Critic's Part: Wystan Curnow Art Writings 1971-2013*. Wellington: Adam Art Gallery, Te Pātaka Toi, 2014.
- Beeby, C. E. "The Influence of the Carnegie Corporation." In McKinnon, *The American Connection*, 44-49.
- Belich, James. *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders from the 1880s to the Year 2000*. Auckland: Penguin Press, 2001.
- Bell, Leonard. "Border Crossings: The Visual Arts." In *Jewish Lives in New Zealand: A History*, edited by Leonard Bell and Diana Morrow, 50-105. Auckland: Godwit, 2012.
- . "Don Driver: On the Margins." *Art New Zealand* 18, (Summer 1981): 30-35.
- Berman, Edward H. *The Ideology of Philanthropy: The Influence of the Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller Foundations on American Foreign Policy*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983.
- Bett, Elva. *New Zealand Art: A Modern Perspective*. Auckland: Reed Methuen, 1986.
- Bowman, Richard. "Paintings with Fluorescent Pigments of the Microcosm and Macrocosm." *Leonardo* 6, no. 4 (August 1973): 289-292, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1572843>.
- Bradnock, Lucy, and Rani Singh. "PAPA'S GOT A BRAND NEW BAG: Crafting an Art Scene." In Peabody et. al., *Pacific Standard Time: Los Angeles Art 1945-1980*, 66-123.
- Brook, Donald. "Some Comments on 'Cultural Imperialism.'" *CAS Broadsheet* 4, no. 3 (September 1974): 12-14.
- Brown, Gordon H. "The Auckland Scene." *Ascent: A Journal of the Arts in New Zealand* 1, no. 3 (April 1969): 64-73.
- . *Colin McCahon: Artist*. Rev. ed. Auckland: Reed, 1993.
- . *New Zealand Painting, 1940-1960: Conformity and Dissension*. Wellington: Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand, 1981. Exhibition catalogue.



- . “The Pursuit of Modernism in the 1940s and Early 1950s 2.” *Art New Zealand* 31 (Winter 1984): 50-54.
- Brown, Gordon H., and Hamish Keith. *An Introduction to New Zealand Painting, 1839-1980*. 2nd ed. Auckland: Collins, 1982.
- Brown, Maria E. “The History and Function of the Auckland City Art Gallery in Constructing a Canon of Modernist New Zealand Art.” Master’s thesis, University of Auckland, 1999.
- Bryan-Wilson, Julia. *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.
- Cann, Tyler and Mervedes Vicente. “Points of Contact.” In Barton, Cann and Vicente, eds. *Points of Contact: Jim Allen, Len Lye, Hélio Oiticica*, 10-18.
- Clark, T. J. *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1973.
- Cochran, Vita, and Jill Trevelyan. *Rita Angus: Live to Paint and Paint to Live*. Auckland: Godwit/Random House in association with City Gallery Wellington and Hocken Library, Dunedin, 2001.
- Cockroft, Eva. “Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War.” *Artforum* 12, no. 10 (June, 1974): 39-41.
- Conwell, Donna. “Protesting Art and Technology.” In Peabody et. al., *Pacific Standard Time: Los Angeles Art 1945-1980*, 219.
- Cull, Nicholas John. *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Culler, George D. “America Introduction.” In Auckland City Art Gallery, *Painting from the Pacific*, [23-24].
- Cullinan, Nicholas. “From Vietnam to Fiat-Nam: The Politics of Arte Povera.” *October* 124, (Spring, 2008): 8-30.
- Curnow, Wystan. “Morris Louis at the Auckland City Art Gallery.” *Arts and Community* 7, no. 12, (December 1971): 12-13.
- . “New Forms Depict Nothing.” *New Zealand Listener*, 11 January 1975. 19.
- . “Painting in the Pacific.” *Landfall* 15, no. 3 (September 1961): 259-62.
- Curnow, Wystan, and Robert Leonard. “Contact: Jim Allen Talks to Wystan Curnow and Robert Leonard,” *Art New Zealand* 95 (Winter 2000): 48-55, 99.
- Dirlik, Arif. “The Asia-Pacific Idea: Reality and Representation in the Invention of a Regional Structure.” *Journal of World History* 3, no. 1 (Spring, 1992): 55-79, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20078512>.
- Dizard, Wilson P. *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the U.S. Information Agency*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004.
- Docking, Gil. Foreword to *Pacific Cities Loan Exhibition*, by Auckland City Art Gallery, [5].
- . *Two Hundred Years of New Zealand Painting*. Melbourne: Lansdowne, 1971.
- Docking, Gil, Michael Dunn, and Edward Hanfling. *Two Hundred and Forty Years of New Zealand Painting*. Rev. ed. Auckland: David Bateman, 2012.
- Doss, Erika Lee. *Twentieth-Century American Art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Drohojowska-Philp, Hunter. *Rebels in Paradise: The Los Angeles Art Scene and the 1960s*. New York: A John Macrae Book/Henry Holt and Company, 2011.

- Duncan, Carol and Alan Wallach. "The Museum of Modern Art as Late Capitalist Ritual: An Iconographic Analysis." *Marxist Perspectives* 4, (Winter, 1978), 28-51.
- Dunn, Michael. *A Concise History of New Zealand Painting*. Auckland: David Bateman, 1991.
- . *New Zealand Painting: A Concise History*. 2nd ed. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2003.
- . *New Zealand Sculpture: A History*. Updated ed. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2008.
- "Editorial." *Auckland City Art Gallery Quarterly* 26, 1963, 2.
- Eight American Artists*. [Auckland: 1958]. Exhibition catalogue.
- Elam School of Fine Arts. *Visionary Architecture*. Auckland: Pelorus Press, 1962.
- Elderfield, John. *Frankenthaler*. New York: Abrams, 1989.
- Elliott, R. L. J. "Two Decades of American Painting: Art, Politics and the Cold War." PhD thesis, Australian National University, 2009.
- Entwisle, Peter. *Treasures of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery*. Dunedin: Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 1990.
- . *William Mathew Hodgkins and His Circle*. Dunedin: Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 1984. Exhibition catalogue.
- "Exhibition of Contemporary New Zealand Art in the United States." *New Zealand Foreign Affairs Review* 20, no. 1 (January 1970): 13-20.
- Feeney, Warren. *The Radical, the Reactionary and the Canterbury Society of Arts, 1880-1996*. Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2011.
- Ferguson, Bruce W. "Exhibition Rhetorics: Material Speech and Utter Sense." In *Thinking about Exhibitions*, edited by Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson and Sandy Nairne, 175-190. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Franc, Helen M. "The Early Years of the International Program and Council." In *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-Century: At Home and Abroad*, 109-149.
- Franks, Simon Ashley. "Elam 1890-1983: A History of the Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland." Master's thesis, University of Auckland, 1984.
- Garrity, Tim. "Meditations on the Exhibition Some Recent American Art." *Auckland City Art Gallery Quarterly* 59, [1974], 12-14.
- Geraets, John. "Charles Brasch's *Landfall*: A Second Life." In *Enduring Legacy: Charles Brasch, Patron, Poet and Collector*, edited by Donald Kerr, 127-42. Dunedin: University of Otago Press, in association with University of Otago Library, 2003.
- Gill, Linda. *Gretchen Albrecht*. Auckland: Random Century, 1991.
- Goldsmith, Susette. "Govett-Brewster Art Gallery: History Research Project." Unpublished manuscript, July 2007, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery Archives.
- Govett-Brewster Art Gallery. *Don Driver: A Survey of His Life and Works, Incorporating a Catalogue of the Don Driver 1965-1978 Exhibition*. New Plymouth: Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, 1979. Exhibition catalogue.
- . *The State of California Painting*. New Plymouth: Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, 1972. Exhibition catalogue.
- . *With Spirit: Don Driver, a Retrospective*. New Plymouth: Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, 1999. Exhibition catalogue.
- Green, Tony. "McCahon's Visit to the United States: A Reading of Letters and Lecture Notes." *Bulletin of New Zealand Art History* 3, (1975): 19-42.

- . “Modernism and Modernization.” In *Headlands: Thinking through New Zealand Art*, edited by Mary Barr, 147-159. Sydney: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1992. Exhibition catalogue.
- Greenberg, Clement. *Post Painterly Abstraction*. Los Angeles: 1964. Exhibition catalogue.
- Gribben, Trish. *Michael Smither, Painter*. Auckland: Ron Sang Publications, 2004.
- Guilbaut, Serge. *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.
- Hanfling, Edward. “Morris Louis in Australia and New Zealand.” *The Burlington Magazine* 151, no. 1281 (December 2009): 830-35.
- Harris, Jonathan. *The New Art History: A Critical Introduction*. London: Routledge, 2001.
- Harris, Neil, and Martina Roudabush Norelli. *Art, Design, and the Modern Corporation: The Collection of Container Corporation of America, a Gift to the National Museum of American Art*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1985.
- Harrison, Charles, and Paul Wood, eds. *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*. New ed. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003.
- Hauptman, William. “The Suppression of Art in the McCarthy Era.” *Artforum* 12, no. 4 (October 1973): 48-52.
- Hickey, Dave. *Helen Lundeborg and the Illusory Landscape: Five Decades of Painting*. Los Angeles: Feitelson Arts Foundation, 2004.
- Hirsch, Richard. “Contemporary American Painting.” In Auckland City Art Gallery, *Contemporary American Painting from the James A. Michener Collection*, [2-3].
- . Introduction to *The James A. Michener Foundation Collection*, by Allentown Art Museum, vii-xi.
- Hoadley, Steve. *New Zealand United States Relations: Friends No Longer Allies*. Wellington: New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, 2000.
- Horrocks, Roger. *Len Lye: A Biography*. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2001.
- Hutchinson, Alice. *Ray Thorburn: Line on Line*. Palmerston North: Te Manawa Museums Trust, 2007. Exhibition catalogue.
- Ikegami, Hiroko. *The Great Migrator: Robert Rauschenberg and the Global Rise of American Art*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010.
- Ireland, Kevin, Aaron Lister, and Damian Skinner. *A Tourist in Paradise Lost: The Art of Michael Illingworth*. Wellington: City Gallery Wellington, 2001. Exhibition catalogue.
- Israel, Matthew. *Kill for Peace: American Artists Against the Vietnam War*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013.
- Jachec, Nancy. *The Philosophy and Politics of Abstract Expressionism, 1940-1960*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- . *Politics and Painting at the Venice Biennale, 1948-64: Italy and the Idea of Europe*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007.
- Jacques Lipchitz: 158 Bronzes 1912-1962*. [Wellington: Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, 1963]. Exhibition catalogue.
- Johnston, Courtney. “Peter Tomory: The New Zealand Years, 1956-1968.” Master’s thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2004.
- Johnstone, Christopher. “The First Wave: Contemporary New Zealand Art in Europe in the 1960s.” *Art New Zealand* 117 (Summer 2005-2006): 72-76.

- Jones, Caroline A. *Bay Area Figurative Art, 1950-1965*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.
- . *Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg's Modernism and the Bureaucratization of the Senses*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Jordan, Caroline. "Cultural Exchange in the Midst of Chaos: Theodore Sizer's Exhibition 'Art of Australia 1788-1941.'" *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art* 13, (2013): 25-51.
- Jordan, Caroline and Rebecca Rice. "'Cultural Propaganda' and the Politics of Taste: The Carnegie Corporation's Cancelled *Art of New Zealand* Exhibition, 1941." *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art* 2, (2014): 118-140.
- Kays, Judith S. "Mark Tobey and Jackson Pollock: Setting the Record Straight." In Barañano and Bärmann, *Mark Tobey*, 91-114.
- Keith, Hamish. *Native Wit*. Auckland: Random House, 2008.
- . "Inside American and Beyond..." *Auckland City Art Gallery Quarterly* 42, 1968, 3-9.
- Keppel, Frederick P. *Informal Report of the President on Visit to the Southern British Dominions, January-June, 1935*. New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1935.
- Kimmelman, Michael. "Revisiting the Revisionists: The Modern, its Critics, and the Cold War." In *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-Century: At Home and Abroad*, 38-55.
- King, Michael. "Ramsden, George Eric Oakes." From the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand. Last modified 14 January 2014. Accessed 21 April 2015.  
<http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/4r1/ramsden-george-eric-oakes>.
- Kozloff, Max. "American Painting during the Cold War." *Artforum* 11, no. 9 (May 1973): 43-54.
- Krauss, Rosalind. Introduction to *Morris Louis*, by Auckland City Art Gallery, [4-6].
- Krenn, Michael L. *Fall-Out Shelters for the Human Spirit: American Art and the Cold War*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.
- Lagemann, Ellen Condliffe. *The Politics of Knowledge: The Carnegie Corporation, Philanthropy, and Public Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992. First published 1989 by Wesleyan University Press.
- Landau, Laura. *Northwest Mythologies: The Interactions of Mark Tobey, Morris Graves, Kenneth Callahan, and Guy Anderson*. Seattle: Tacoma Art Museum, Tacoma in association with University of Washington Press, 2003. Exhibition catalogue.
- Landauer, Susan. *The San Francisco School of Abstract Expressionism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996. Exhibition catalogue.
- Larking, Matthew. "Reticence Despite Ratification: McCahon's Take on Tessai." *The Journal of New Zealand Art History* 33 (2012-13): 44-59.
- Lealand, Geoffrey. *A Foreign Egg in our Nest? American Popular Culture in New Zealand*. Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1988.
- Leffler, Melvyn P. and Odd Arne Westad. *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Leonard, Robert. "Curnow's Leverage." In Barton, Leonard and Sleight, *The Critic's Part: Wystan Curnow Art Writings 1971-2013*, 1-11.
- Licht, Jennifer. *Some Recent American Art*. Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 1973. Exhibition catalogue.

- Lieberman, W. S. *From Cezanne through Picasso: 100 Drawings from the Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York*. Auckland: Auckland City Art Gallery, 1971. Exhibition catalogue.
- Lipchitz, Jacques. Foreword to *Jacques Lipchitz: 158 Bronzes 1912-1962*, [3].
- Lippard, Lucy R. "Notes on Seeing Some Recent American Art in New Zealand." *Auckland City Art Gallery Quarterly* 59, [1974], 2-3.
- Lissington, Mary Patricia. *New Zealand and the United States, 1840-1944*. Wellington: Government Print, 1972.
- Littleton, Taylor and Maltby Sykes. *Advancing American Art: Painting, Politics, and Cultural Confrontation at Mid-Century*. 2nd ed. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005.
- Livingston, Jane, "The Art of Richard Diebenkorn." In *The Art of Richard Diebenkorn*, edited by Jane Livingston, 17-92. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. Exhibition catalogue.
- . *The Paintings of Joan Mitchell*. Berkeley: Whitney Museum of American Art in association with University of California Press, 2002. Exhibition catalogue.
- Macdonald, Sharon. Introduction to Part I: Perspectives, Disciplines, Concepts. In *A Companion to Museum Studies*, 14-16, edited by Sharon MacDonald. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006.
- . Introduction to *Theorizing Museums: Representing Identity and Diversity in a Changing World*, 1-18, edited by Sharon Macdonald and Gordon Fyfe. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996.
- Macfarlane, Quentin. "20/20 Vision Print Show." *Ascent: A Journal of the Arts in New Zealand* 1, no. 2 (July 1968): 49-50.
- Mackle, Tony. "Stewart Bell MacLennan: 'the Man for the Job.'" *Journal of New Zealand Art History* 26 (2005): 55-67.
- Manhire, Bill. "Breaking the Line: A View of American and New Zealand Poetry." In McKinnon, *The American Connection*, 94-108.
- Markham, Sydney Frank, Henry Caselli Richards, and Walter Reginald Brook Oliver. *A Report on the Museums and Art Galleries of Australia and New Zealand*. London: The Museums Association, 1933.
- Marquis, Alice Goldfarb. *Art Czar: The Rise and Fall of Clement Greenberg*. Aldershot, UK: Lund Humphries, 2006.
- Matthews, Jane de Hart. "Art and Politics in Cold War America." *The American Historical Review* 81 (February-December 1976): 762-87, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1864779>.
- [McCahon, Colin]. "Karl Kasten." *Auckland City Art Gallery Quarterly* 10, 1959, 3.
- McCahon, Colin. "Painting Classes." *Auckland City Art Gallery Quarterly* 12, 1960, 3.
- McCredie, Athol. "Going Public: New Zealand Art Museums in the 1970s." Master's thesis, Massey University, 1999. Reprinted 2006 with corrections.
- McDougall, J. F. "Community Arts Service: The First Year of Work." In *Year Book of the Arts in New Zealand No. 3: 1947*, edited by Howard Wadman, 125-27. Wellington: Tombs, 1947.
- McGibbon, Ian. "New Zealand's Intervention in the Korean War, June-July 1950." *International History Review* 11, no. 2 (May 1989): 277-288, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40106000>
- McIntyre, W. David. *Background to the Anzus Pact: Policy-Making, Strategy, and Diplomacy, 1945-55*. Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 1995.

- McKinnon, Malcolm, ed. *The American Connection*. Wellington: Allen and Unwin/Port Nicholson Press in association with the Stout Centre for the Study of New Zealand Society, History and Culture, 1988.
- . *Independence and Foreign Policy: New Zealand in the World since 1935*. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1993.
- . *New Zealand in World Affairs*. Vol 2, 1957-1972. Wellington: New Zealand Institute of International Affairs with assistance from the Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1991.
- McQueen, H. C. *Education in New Zealand Museums: An Account of Experiments Assisted by the Carnegie Corporation of New York*. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1942.
- Medlin, Brian. "Cultural Imperialism." *CAS Broadsheet* 4, no. 3 (September 1974): 3-10.
- Meyer, James Sampson. *Minimalism*. London: Phaidon, 2000.
- . *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.
- Michener, James A. "The Collector: An Informal Memoir." In University of Texas at Austin, University Art Museum, *The James A. Michener Collection: Twentieth Century American Painting*, ix-xviii.
- . Foreword to *The James A. Michener Foundation Collection*, by Allentown Art Museum, iii-vi.
- Moore, Marcus T. G. "Marcel Duchamp and New Zealand Art, 1965 - 2007 by Means of Duchamp's Peripheral Vision: Case Studies in a History of Reception." PhD thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2012.
- Moses, Dorothy. "'Wayside' Show Reaped Benefits For Project Concern." *New Zealand Woman's Weekly*. 3 May 1971, 16-18.
- The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-Century: At Home and Abroad*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1994.
- "Mystic Painters of the Northwest." *Life*, 28 September 1953, 84-87.
- "New Plans for the City Art Gallery," *Auckland City Art Gallery Quarterly* 37, 1967, 3-10.
- Ninkovich, Frank A. *The Diplomacy of Ideas: U.S. Foreign Policy and Cultural Relations, 1938-1950*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- Noble, Jo. "Modern Art: What's It All About?" *New Zealand Woman's Weekly*, 14 June 1965, 24-26.
- North, Ian. "A Reply to Protest." *CAS Broadsheet* 4, no. 3 (September 1974): 15-17.
- O'Brian, John. *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*. Vol. 3, *Affirmations and Refusals, 1950-1956*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.
- O'Brien, Gregory. *Hanly*. Auckland: Ron Sang Publications, 2012.
- O'Sullivan, Vincent. "Sketching the Artist." In *Ralph Hotere*, by Vincent O'Sullivan and Kriselle Baker, 306-19. Auckland: Ron Sang Publications, 2008.
- Osborne, Peter. *Conceptual Art*. London: Phaidon, 2002.
- Osgood, Kenneth Alan. *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006.
- Parmar, Inderjeet. *Foundations of the American Century: The Ford, Carnegie, and Rockefeller Foundations in the Rise of American Power*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.
- Paton, Justin. *Don Peebles: The Harmony of Opposites*. Christchurch: Hazard Press and Robert McDougall Art Gallery, 1996. Exhibition catalogue.

- Paul, Janet. "The Helen Hitchings Gallery in Wellington." *Landfall* 3, no. 4 (December 1949): 357-359.
- Peabody, Rebecca, Andrew Perchuk, Glenn Phillips, Rani Singh, with Lucy Bradnock, eds. *Pacific Standard Time: Los Angeles Art 1945-1980*. London: Tate Publishing in association with the Getty Research Institute and the J. Paul Getty Museum, 2011.
- Perchuk, Andrew, and Catherine Taft. "FLOATING STRUCTURES: Building the Modern in Postwar Los Angeles." In Peabody et. al., *Pacific Standard Time: Los Angeles Art 1945-1980*, 4-65.
- Phillips, Glenn. "Process Painting." In Peabody et. al., *Pacific Standard Time: Los Angeles Art 1945-1980*, 226.
- Phillips, Jock. "The Influence of American Culture on New Zealand since the Second World War" in *New Zealand, Canada and the United States*, 28-46.
- Phillips, Jock, and Ellen Ellis. *Brief Encounter: American Forces and the New Zealand People, 1942-1945: An Illustrated Essay*. Wellington: Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1992.
- Plagens, Peter. *Sunshine Muse: Art on the West Coast, 1945-1970*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999. First published 1974 by Praeger.
- Porter, Gwynneth, ed. *Jim Allen: The Skin of Years*. Auckland: Clouds and Michael Lett, 2014.
- Pound, Francis. "From Here: Reading and Misreading European, Russian and American Modernism." In *New Zealand Modernism - in Context: Paintings from the Gibbs Collection*, edited by James Ross, 10-25. New Zealand: The Gibbs Collection, 1995.
- . *The Invention of New Zealand: Art and National Identity, 1930-1970*. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2009.
- . "McCahon, Mondrian and Masking Tape: A Reading of the Centre from the Outermost Edge." *Journal of New Zealand Art History* 23 (2002): 11-20.
- Rasmussen, Waldo. Preface to *Some Recent American Art*, by Jennifer Licht, 8-9.
- . *Two Decades of American Painting*. Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 1967. Exhibition catalogue.
- Rabel, Roberto. "New Zealand and the United States in the Early Cold War Era, 1945-49." *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 7, no. 2 (December, 1988): 1-10, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41053497>.
- . *New Zealand and the Vietnam War: Politics and Diplomacy*. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2005.
- Rietzler, Katharina. "Before the Cultural Cold Wars: American Philanthropy and Cultural Diplomacy in the Inter-War Years." *Historical Research* 84, no. 223 (February 2011): 148-164, DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-2281.2010.00548.x.
- Roberts, Neil. *The Robert McDougall Art Gallery: A Profile of the Art Gallery of the City of Christchurch, 1932-82*. Christchurch: Christchurch City Council, 1982.
- Roberts, Neil, and Felicity Milburn. *A Concise History of Art in Canterbury: 1850-2000*. Christchurch: Robert McDougall Art Gallery, 2000.
- Rodgers, Kerry. "Carnegie's Legacy." *New Zealand Geographic* 76, (November/December, 2005): 52-67.
- Rose, Barbara. "Problems of Criticism, V: The Politics of Art, Part II." *Artforum* 7, no. 5 (January 1969), 44-49.
- . *Frankenthaler*. 3rd ed. New York: H.N. Abrams, 1979.
- Sandler, Irving. "Abstract Expressionism and the Cold War." *Art in America* 96, no. 6 (June-July 2008): 65-74.

- . *American Art of the 1960s*. New York: Harper and Row, 1988.
- . *The New York School: The Painters and Sculptors of the Fifties*. New York: Harper and Row, 1978.
- Saunders, Frances Stonor. *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War*. London: Granta, 1999.
- Schwartz, Therese. "The Politicization of the Avant-Garde." *Art in America* 59, no. 6 (November/December 1971): 96-105.
- Seitz, William C. *Mark Tobey*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1962. Exhibition catalogue.
- Simpson, Edward C. *A Survey of the Arts in New Zealand*. Wellington: Wellington Chamber Music Society, 1961.
- Simpson, Peter. *Colin McCahon: The Titirangi Years, 1953-59*. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2007.
- Smith, Terry. "The Provincialism Problem." *Artforum* 13, no. 1 (September 1974): 54-59.
- Stackpole, Stephen H. *Carnegie Corporation Commonwealth Program, 1911-1961*. New York: Carnegie Corporation, 1963.
- . *Commonwealth Program Travel Grants, 1947-1962*. New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1963.
- Szarkowski, John. "The Family of Man." In *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-Century*, 13-37.
- . *The Photographer's Eye*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966.
- Taylor, N. M. *The New Zealand People at War: The Home Front*. Volume 1. Wellington: Historical Publications Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1986.
- Tizard, Ronald. *The Auckland Society of Arts, 1870-1970: A Centennial History*. Auckland: 1972.
- Tomory, Peter. Foreword to *Painting from the Pacific: Japan, America, Australia, New Zealand*, by Auckland City Art Gallery, [3].
- . Introduction to *International Prints*, by Auckland City Art Gallery, [2].
- . "Painting in the Pacific." *Home and Building*. 1 July 1961, 56-59.
- . "What's Different About New Zealand Art?" *New Zealand Listener*. 30 October 1964, 3, 22.
- Trevelyan, Jill. *A Canterbury Perspective. Since the 'Sixties*. Christchurch: Robert McDougall Art Gallery, 1990. Exhibition catalogue.
- . *Peter McLeavey: The Life and Times of a New Zealand Art Dealer*. Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2013.
- , ed. *Toss Woollaston: A Life in Letters*. Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2004.
- Trotter, Ann. "From Suspicion to Growing Partnership: New Zealand and Japan." In *New Zealand in World Affairs*. Vol. 2, 1957-1972, 195-226.
- . *New Zealand and Japan, 1945-1952: The Occupation and the Peace Treaty*. London: Athlone Press, 1990.
- , ed. *New Zealand, Canada and the United States: The Papers of the Twenty-Second Foreign Policy School, 1987*. Dunedin: University Extension, University of Otago, 1987.
- Turner, John B. *Good Luck John! Part 1: Under the Influence: Being Evidence of a Life in which Photography has Played an Important Part*. Auckland: J. Turner, 1985.



- University of Texas at Austin, University Art Museum. *The James A. Michener Collection: Twentieth Century American Painting*. Austin: University Art Museum, University of Texas at Austin, 1977.
- van Elteren, Mel. *Americanism and Americanization: A Critical History of Domestic and Global Influence*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006.
- Walls, Michael. "Notes from the Land of Narcissus." In Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, *The State of California Painting*, [2-4].
- Wane, G. M. "The King and the Nightingale: An Analysis of the Roles of the New Zealand Government and the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand in the Administration and Development of the Arts in New Zealand, 1964-1974." Master's thesis, University of Auckland, 1975.
- Warr, Tracey, and Amelia Jones. *The Artist's Body*. London: Phaidon, 2000.
- Wilcox, Allen. "8 American Artists." *Home and Building*. 1 March 1958. 48-49.
- Williams, Thomas. *The Bay Area School: Californian Artists from the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s*. Farnham, UK: Lund Humphries, 2013.
- Wolfe, Richard. "Art in the Cold War: Cultural Contact between New Zealand and the Soviet Union." *Art New Zealand* 144 (Summer 2012-2013): 63-67.
- Wright, Alan. "Some Recent American Art." *Auckland City Art Gallery Quarterly* 59, [1974], 4-11.
- Wright, Alan, and Edward Hanfling. *Mrkusich: The Art of Transformation*. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2009.
- Young, Eric. "Hans Hofmann: An Early Provincetown Landscape." *Quarterly of the Auckland City Art Gallery* 52, 1972, 3-5.