

# Stories of Victorian Paintings at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki – Navigating Intersections between Past and Present

ANYA SAMARASINGHE

Victorian painting featured strongly in Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki's early collection and continued to be acquired well into the twentieth century. These artworks have tended to be displayed through the lenses of theme and narrative. However, the need to invigorate this format is gaining momentum as curators are exploring ways to navigate intersections between past and present. *Te Haerenga/The Passage*, currently on display at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, is in keeping with the drive towards enabling historical, international artworks, such as Victorian painting, to be displayed in connection with contemporary New Zealand and Māori art, thus shifting boundaries between traditional perceptions of the art historical canon and contemporary notions of identities and ideas.

KEYWORDS # Victorian art # Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki # Exhibitions # art history # art criticism # international historical artworks



FIGURE 1. Copyist at work in the Mackelvie Gallery circa 1900. Photo courtesy of the E.H.McCormick Research Library, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki.

Theme and narrative have long-been the mainstays of exhibiting Victorian art at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki. *A Tale to Tell, Love & Death, Tales of Love and Enchantment* - extracts from titles of past exhibitions - reveal such an interest. Stories constitute the backbone of art galleries. Regardless of whether an artwork features a narrative subject, or is purely formal, the artwork's provenance and historical context and the ways in which visitors respond to the artwork, mean that the notion of storytelling, or perhaps more accurately, story-fashioning, is an inexorable feature of art galleries. Curators are constantly exploring ways to re-present works in collections, to make stories palpable and to resonate in some way with viewers. Victorian art at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki is no exception and simultaneously presents its own unique set of obstacles and merits.

This article focuses on selected examples of Victorian artworks held by Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki and significant exhibitions of Victorian art. Changing attitudes and values show how these artworks can be seen as arbiters rather than fixed objects that are held hostage by their

historical context. This is not to say that there is no value in exhibiting Victorian painting - or, in fact, art from any period - within its historical context. It would be a disservice to the art of the past if it was not allowed to stand on its own merits and was, for example, instead seen exclusively as a means of giving relevance to other art. However, arguably, there is risk of an equal disservice if Victorian paintings were to be displayed consistently with reference to their historical conditions or purely in terms of theme, narrative and style. The display of Victorian painting in the context of a public art gallery in Aotearoa New Zealand should be bolder and aim to facilitate multiple interpretations, thereby increasing its reach beyond aesthetic merit and socio-historic circumstances.

Public art institutions function as sites of multiplicity, where a number of interactions take place. Such interactions present opportunities for nationalist cultural narratives to communicate with the margins, academia to negotiate with the public, and for the past to enter a dialogue with the present. All this and more must be considered when looking at artworks held by, and displayed, in public art institutions. Movement plays heavily into the context of a public art gallery. Not only does the nature of rotating exhibitions and artworks, at the most basic level, rely on motion and change, but the meaning and significance of artworks and exhibitions need to be malleable and able to resist calcification in order to remain visible.

In terms of visibility, international historical artworks are evergreens in Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki's collection, as they are often on display, sometimes for stretches of more than a year, with Victorian artworks featuring in these long-haul exhibitions. Since the 2011 refurbishment and re-opening of the building, these artworks tend to be reserved for the Mackelvie Gallery space on the mezzanine level. The space pays homage to the Classical art historical tradition with its Ionic columns and barrel-vaulted ceiling, therefore, the arrangement of the gallery itself highlights an affinity with the traditional Western canon of art. (Figure 1)

The study of Victorian art has many facets, delineated along semiotic, aesthetic and socio-historical lines and the term 'Victorian' is worth investigating in its own right. However, for the purposes of this article, I am choosing to embrace it as a signifier of a time period (the reign of Queen Victoria from 1837-1901) and as a broadly-defined category of art, encompassing a range of styles, genres and movements, including Victorian narrative, Pre-Raphaelitism, Classicism and Aestheticism. Increasingly, the concept of 'Victorian' is now being seen as an inclusive and fluid site,

rather than an inert and narrow category of classification, merely signalling 'British' or 'English' in the reign of Queen Victoria. Conceived as a site, 'Victorian' can be understood in a more multinational context due to the realities of the experience of empire. This is of immense value when considered in the context of artworks, particularly with artworks acquired and displayed for public appreciation in a former colonial nation, such as Aotearoa New Zealand. Victorian artworks in Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki function as both object and sites.

### THE SCENTED SOAP PROBLEM

Peter Tomory (1922-2008), Director of Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki from 1956-65, lamented that 'there is not one single great example of European art in this country.'<sup>1</sup> Whether this was true, or even a relevant sentiment, is not important here. What is revealing about such a declaration is that it uncovers anxieties over the Euro-centric canon and how Aotearoa's art collections signalled or retreated from long-established hierarchies in the art historical sphere. What is great art? Does it even matter? Despite the number of Victorian paintings held by Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, and their place as some of the first artworks in the fledgling collection, Tomory evidently excluded them from the hallowed category of 'great art.'

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki was officially opened in 1888, with the building also home to the Auckland Free Public Library. Its collection largely had its origins in Sir George Grey's (1812-1898) gifts to the city of Auckland, which comprised historical European works and manuscripts, many of which are in the Central City Library. Over fifty artworks formed the basis of the gallery's collection. Grey's gift reflects a thoroughly traditional European taste for works in the style of the European Masters. Caspar Netscher's (1639-1684) *Girl Arranging Flowers* (1683) is one such example. However, if one was to take up Tomory's position, none of these artworks passed muster as 'great' works of art. Although Grey's collection featured some nineteenth-century artworks, such as the Victorian artist John Joseph Barker's (1824-1904) *The Poet Chatterton* (1860), it was not until James Tannock Mackelvie's (1824-1885) bequest of his art collection and the subsequent acquisitions of the Mackelvie Trust Board, that Victorian painting firmly claimed its place.

In the twentieth century and well into our own, Victorian art has been seen as anathema to 'serious' art, with

Modernism often credited with throwing down the gauntlet. The Bloomsbury Group's views on Victorian art became a pervasive element of twentieth-century Modernist criticism. One of its key members, Roger Fry (1866-1934), derisively characterised the art of Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema (1836-1912), an archetypal Victorian painter with works in Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki's collection, as featuring creations of 'highly-scented soap.'<sup>2</sup> Fry was critical of Alma-Tadema's imaginative genre scenes of upper-class leisure in the classical period, viewing these artworks to be mere 'shop-finish,' due to the artist's style and technique imbuing his canvases with a highly refined and polished effect. Fry's declarations become more cutting when one considers that he wrote this less than a year after the artist's death, and, furthermore, stated 'so little had he been alive to me that though I had undoubtedly seen his death in the papers, I had completely forgotten it.'<sup>3</sup> These twin concerns of being forgettable and saccharine can often plague Victorian painting. In a public art institution such as Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki this provides both a challenge and an opportunity.



FIGURE 2. Lawrence Alma-Tadema, 'Cleopatra', October 1877. Reproduction courtesy of the Mackelvie Trust Collection, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki. Purchased 1916.

Alma-Tadema's *Cleopatra* (1877) (see Figure 2) has been on display at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki eighteen times since 1962,<sup>4</sup> a feature which is not necessarily regarded positively, as Alma-Tadema's works often inspire a sense of late Victorian overindulgence. Some artworks, such as the *Roses of Heliogabalus* (1888) in particular, have been seen to signify the folly of unbridled attention to beauty and sensory pleasure. However, recently this artwork has received more favourable responses, as its presentation of the past, although more kitschy fantasy than historical, stirs interest rather than scorn. *Roses of Heliogabalus* was given pride of place in the exhibition *A Victorian Obsession: The Pérez Simón Collection* held at Leighton House Museum, London, from November 2014 to April 2015. In a review of the exhibition and its accompanying catalogue, Amy Harris noted the effectiveness of the display of the painting where 'Bouquets of living roses stood on either side of the painting for the first few weeks of the exhibition, which referenced the fresh flowers that Alma-Tadema had shipped to his studio to paint from life, and added to the multi-sensory experience of viewing the painting. Fragrance provided by Jo Malone infused the room with the smell of roses, which visitors began to faintly sense upon climbing the stairs of the house, a perfumed breadcrumb trail of anticipation.'<sup>5</sup>

In the same year at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Alma-Tadema's *Cleopatra* was incorporated into an exhibition of contemporary New Zealand jewellery. *Cleopatra's* story of a life of luxury and the elaborate frame of the artwork were well-suited to the atmosphere of the 2015 exhibition, *Wunderkammer: New Zealand Jewellery*, as the exhibition's evocation of the 'wunderkammer,' (cabinet of curiosities) enabled *Cleopatra* to be admired as an object of an imagined past – remote and exaggerated, yet fascinating.

### 'BRITAIN OF THE SOUTH'

There are strong threads of settler-colonial ideas, identity and taste that can be traced through stories and themes of a number of Victorian paintings held by Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki. From 1893, The Mackelvie Trust Board appointed advisers to acquire works on its behalf specifically from Britain.<sup>6</sup> Most of these early advisers were based in Britain and had close ties to the art market. There were not any specific instructions given as to which types of works to seek out, so these advisers had real agency to select works that appealed to them and were of a reasonable price. *In Time of Peril* (1897) by Edmund Blair Leighton (1852-1922)

(see Figure 3) was acquired by the English artist and Royal Academician, Marcus Stone (1840-1921), most likely directly from the Royal Academy exhibition of 1897.<sup>7</sup> Stone had recently been appointed as an adviser and had strong connections with the Mackelvie Board, as his wife, Laura, was the daughter of trustee Logan Campbell's business partner, William Brown.<sup>8</sup> These factors signal a purchase that was made within a context of British taste and ideas, which also manifest aesthetically in the painting itself.

*In Time of Peril* can be described as an archetypal work of the nineteenth-century medieval revival theme and



FIGURE 3. Edmund Blair Leighton, *In Time of Peril*, 1897. Oil on canvas. Reproduction courtesy of the Mackelvie Trust Collection, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki.

Victorian academic style. It illustrates an imagined scene of a medieval-styled queen or noblewoman and her two sons, possibly princes, seeking refuge in a monastery. The work was displayed most recently in the exhibition *Victorian Tales of Love and Enchantment*, which ran from September 2011 to April 2014 at the gallery. The accompanying wall text read: 'In Time of Peril was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1897, the year Queen Victoria celebrated her Diamond Jubilee. Leighton specialised in romantic scenes from a

medieval past. Here the endangered princes, their glamorous mother and the family wealth receive sanctuary in a monastery. Blair Leighton described the scene as “laid at the water gate of a monastery in the fourteenth century, the outcome of reading of the shelter afforded by such places to the women, children and treasure, of those who were hard driven, and in danger.”<sup>9</sup>

A work such as *In Time of Peril* appealed to late nineteenth-century notions of nostalgia and mythology around British heritage and culture, inspired by the romanticism of the past in the literary works of figures such as John Keats (1795-1821) and Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832). Paralleling the interest in medieval and romantic themes in literature, many artworks from this period incorporated themes from Anglo-Saxon and Celtic culture. The Arthurian and Medieval Revival in British art presented an iconography closely tied to the virtues and values of the British monarchy. During the early years of Queen Victoria’s reign the Queen’s Robing Room at the New Palace of Westminster was decorated with frescoes by William Dyce (1806-1864), who used Thomas Malory’s fifteenth-century epic, *Le Morte D’Arthur*, as the allegorical basis for presenting the timeless values of the British monarchy and government. There were episodes from Malory’s text that represented themes of piety, mercy and generosity.

The theme of refuge is something that repeats in Blair Leighton’s oeuvre. At the Royal Academy Exhibition in 1896, the year before *In Time of Peril* was exhibited, he produced a work titled *In Nomine Christi* (untraced), another medieval subject depicting nuns giving sanctuary to a persecuted Jewish man. The notion of sanctuary and refuge can be related to migration; Aotearoa New Zealand, along with Australia, experienced an influx of British immigrants in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the nineteenth century, through the use of ‘booster literature’ (pamphlets that promoted moving to New Zealand) and figures such as the New Zealand Company’s Edward Gibbon Wakefield (1796-1862), Aotearoa New Zealand was conceptualised as the cultural historian E.H. McCormick (1906-1995) writes, as a ‘home for loyal gentlefolk and their retainers.’<sup>10</sup> Therefore *In Time of Peril* could be displayed with reference to its iconographic meaning in the context of notions of Aotearoa New Zealand as a place of refuge for British migrants in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The term ‘Britain of the South’ became associated with Aotearoa New Zealand and this idea carried through to the twentieth century. The notion that ‘home’ was Britain, and Aotearoa New Zealand was a satellite manifestation of

the homeland, was a strong feature in conceptions around national identity. Literature such as Alan Mulgan’s *Home: A New Zealander’s Adventure*, published in 1927, described travelling to England in search of a sense of belonging in the homeland.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, Victorian and Edwardian artworks, such as *In Time of Peril* in Aotearoa New Zealand’s public collections are invested in, and navigate, the encounters between British imperial heritage and the evolution of the concept of Aotearoa New Zealand identity. An artwork such as *In Time of Peril* is heavily invested in its links with Britain, both in terms of its subject matter and the conditions of its acquisition.

*In Time of Peril* can be linked to the wartime connection of Aotearoa New Zealand and Britain. In 1899, two years after the painting was acquired, Aotearoa New Zealand would send troops to participate in its first international conflict in support of Britain during the Boer War. *In Time of Peril* has a strong association with Aotearoa New Zealand and Britain’s wartime connection as the painting was copied and auctioned to raise funds for the First World War effort. A Mrs Stratford produced a copy of the painting which was presented to the New Zealand Patriotic Society in 1915 and another copy by Katherine Burcher was auctioned by the Red Cross Art Union in 1917.<sup>12</sup> The choice of subject was apt in the context of patriotism, as Blair Leighton’s image speaks to notions of duty and honour.

Tomory, writing in the 1962 exhibition catalogue, *British Taste in the Nineteenth Century*, suggested that the British people were interested in art ‘which proclaimed ‘forever England.’<sup>13</sup> *In Time of Peril* could be seen as an exponent of the ‘forever England’ theme with its evocation of medieval romantic notions of chivalry and patriotism. However, for a painting held in Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, the question emerges of whether any sense of ‘forever New Zealand’ can be, or should be, detected in a work like this? McCormick wrote of Aotearoa: ‘Here lies our manifest destiny; it is to this end that a long line of seers and statesmen has led us: to create in these remote islands a refuge for the aristocratic and Monarchical traditions neglected – nay, rejected – by the misguided remainder of mankind.’<sup>14</sup> This is a strong sentiment which, at face value, appears to have little traction with modern-day Aotearoa New Zealand. However, it is a valuable statement in that it helps to trace how deeply entrenched were notions of “Britain of the South”.

While the aesthetic properties of some artworks can be used to foster concepts of patriotism, other Victorian artworks in the collection have more complex legacies. William Hesketh Lever, Lord Leverhulme (1851-1925), gifted

a number of artworks to Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, including *After the Earthquake* (1884) by the Victorian female artist, Sophie Anderson (1823-1898).<sup>15</sup> Leverhulme's wealth, in part, stemmed from his commercial ventures in Africa. He sourced palm oil by establishing plantations in what was then the Belgian Congo. Leverhulme's son, William Hulme Lever (1888-1949), makes a number of references to his father's interest in the Congo, writing that while West Africa could not meet their needs for production, a solution 'came unexpectedly from another quarter – from those dark and then barely explored regions of Central Africa by the Congo River.'<sup>16</sup> More troubling is the younger Leverhulme's declaration that 'One of the first to appreciate the commercial possibilities of the regions discovered by Stanley had been King Leopold II of Belgium, a monarch who undoubtedly possessed a business brain of the first order.'<sup>17</sup> The Belgian King has been heavily criticised, even in his own time for effectively creating his own private state and exploiting the indigenous population at horrific levels, therefore Leverhulme's approval and emulation of the King's activities makes disturbing reading, especially today. The Lady Lever Art Gallery in Liverpool, founded by William Hesketh Lever, Lord Leverhulme, in honour of his wife, has stated that it is re-evaluating the ways in which it will present Leverhulme's collection in the spirit of acknowledging the fraught history of the philanthropist's wealth.<sup>18</sup>

*After the Earthquake* has not been on display since 2007 and none of the other Leverhulme gifts are on display at the time of writing, however, it will be interesting to see how these artworks will be displayed in light of global trends calling for more transparency of provenance. One of the more recent publications on these issues is Alice Procter's *The Whole Picture: The Colonial Story of the Art in Our Museums & Why We Need to Talk About It*. What Procter suggests is that works should be displayed, labelled and captioned without shying away from the issues of theft, exploitation and complicity associated with imperial and colonial expansion.<sup>19</sup> Procter is also behind the *Uncomfortable Art Tours*, launched in 2017, an initiative that conducts tours in some of the major art institutions in London with a focus on how imperialism and power structures permeate these sites and the artworks held within their walls.<sup>20</sup> Here in Aotearoa New Zealand, Victorian paintings held by Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki could be used to highlight the changing societal values of settler-colonial New Zealand, and the current movement towards expanding and honouring the idea that Aotearoa New Zealand is home for people of many identities.

"It's nice when parts of the past can remain a foreign country"<sup>21</sup>

Roger Blackley's rephrasing of the much-quoted opening lines of L.P Hartley's well-known work, *The Go-Between* - 'The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there' - could be used as an epitaph for Victorian art. Teeming with a sense of nostalgia, many examples of Victorian art often evoke a fondness for the past through rose-tinted glasses. The past as depicted in Victorian art can also be highly imaginative and removed from reality, yet at the same time appeal to contemporary sentiments and concerns, such as in the Victorianised Romans of Alma-Tadema's canvases. There have been few exhibitions solely dedicated to Victorian art at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki. The most recent major and international showcase of Victorian art was the 2002 *Love & Death: Art in the Age of Queen Victoria*, curated by Angus Trumble of the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, which toured Australia but which, in Aotearoa New Zealand was exhibited only at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki. *Love & Death* highlights the Victorian interest in the past, both remote and familiar, though, as Blackley's quote suggests, remoteness can be a virtue.

*Love & Death* was organised by themes such as 'Imagining Antiquity,' 'Visions and Symbols,' 'Pathos and Poetry,' and 'Faith and the Afterlife,' and featured artworks by a range of Victorian titans, such as Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898), Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882) and Alma-Tadema. Many of the artworks displayed were examples of late Victorian art, an aspect which is also mirrored by Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki's holdings, which relates to the time that Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki was founded (1888). These themes suggest a strong interest in the past, one that is imaginative, but that also galvanises links to landmarks of Western culture, such as scenes from Homer's epics to Shakespeare's troubled female leads as featured in Edward Poynter's (1836-1919) *Helen* (1881, Art Gallery of New South Wales) and J. W. Waterhouse's (1849-1917) *Ophelia* (1894, Schaeffer Collection, Sydney).

*The Spirit of the Summit* (1894) by Frederic Leighton (1830-1896) (see Figure 4) was one of Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki's holdings to be included in the *Love & Death* exhibition and featured in the 'Visions and Symbols' theme. Leighton, like Alma-Tadema, is often seen to typify the idea of a Victorian painter and was President of the Royal Academy from 1878 to 1896. His works present a classicism that frequently orbits the Neoclassicism of the previous century in terms of his engagement with human form and



FIGURE 4. Frederic Leighton, *The Spirit of the Summit*, 1894. Oil on canvas. Reproduction courtesy of the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, gift of Moss Davis, 1926.

composition. Beyond this, Leighton's late works cast him into the arena of Aestheticism, which meditates on beauty and its transcendental capacity. Not unnaturally, *The Spirit of the Summit*, produced two years before Leighton's death in 1896, is a painting that emblematises his final style. In *Love & Death*, *The Spirit of the Summit* was shown alongside, among others, Rossetti's *Pandora* (1869), G.F. Watts's (1817-1904) *Endymion* (c.1868-73) and Burne-Jones's *Wheel of Fortune* (1871-85). Aesthetic artworks, broadly speaking, can also share qualities with Symbolism, with subjects and styles that can be deeply moving, or even haunting, such as Watts's *Endymion* – a poetic expression of lovers thwarted and united by Endymion's endless sleep. This kind of art speaks to an audience of today more directly and powerfully than Victorian historical costume pieces. *The Spirit of the Summit* is similarly invested in the perennial cycle of time. The figure, modelled by the Victorian actress Dorothy Dene (1859-1899), sits contemplatively on the peak of a mountain, thus signifying the human spirit's desire to transcend its material and physical reality for something more enduring. Although this is a rather heavy-handed manifestation of this idea, Leighton's late works clearly seek out themes of regeneration and tranquillity.

Moving into contemporary exhibitions, the current *Te Haerenga* (The Passage) in the Mackelvie Gallery, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, demonstrates that the presence of Victorian art and other examples of European historical art do not displace the Art Gallery's centre of gravity. Rather, they enable past values, tastes and ideas to synchronise with contemporary concerns around more inclusive histories and stories that are diverse and move towards meaningful engagement with bi-cultural partnership and multi-cultural identities. This throws into sharp relief the capacity for artworks to function as facilitators for questions and resolutions around how to navigate between past and present without jettisoning the complexities of identity, heritage and agency.

*Te Haerenga*, curated by Nigel Borrell, Shane Cotton, Sophie Matthiesson and Emma Jameson, 'offers a meditation on the theme of journeying in historical European, contemporary New Zealand art and Māori art.'<sup>22</sup> *The Spirit of the Summit* is displayed next to Cotton's (1964-) *Picture Painting* (1994) described in the accompanying wall text as 'a fusion of Māori and Pākehā imagery.'<sup>23</sup> This fusion brings together the canon of Western art through the image of the vase or pot, yet it also reclaims the pot as a feature of nineteenth-century Māori art, as the pot 'derives from Rongopai, the 1887 whareniui (meeting house) that contains important

figurative and naturalistic paintings by followers of the Māori prophet Te Kooti.<sup>24</sup> In his body of work, Cotton's use of the pot plant has taken on various interpretations, through the associations with land, its containment, and its renewing capabilities which are potent markers in Aotearoa's past and present. Therefore, Leighton's Aestheticism shares a similar connection in terms of the theme of renewal and the spiritual character of human experience. While the universal nature of themes such as renewal provide opportunities to forge aesthetic connections between artworks from differing geographic locations and time periods, Victorian painting makes a case for appreciating how attitudes and ideas have changed, or are still evolving. Leighton's *The Spirit of the Summit* features the Victorian actress Dorothy Dene, who is presented as an idealised, though distinctively Leighton-type, Victorian beauty. These beauty ideals were pervasive and extended beyond Britain. The imposition of Western beauty standards on colonised peoples and those living in parts of the British Empire could be explored through the display of Victorian and other paintings at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki. This would enable more conversations about the role of visual culture in Empire and its legacies today, including how artists have responded to and moved beyond such conventions of representing beauty.

*Te Haerenga* was not the first exhibition to disrupt the boundaries between traditional European and contemporary art. The pair of artists, known by the pseudonym, Claire Fontaine (formed in 2004) produced *Foreigners Everywhere* (2011, The Auckland Triennial Collection, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki), which similarly enlivened the traditional academic layout. Fontaine's bold neon signs of the phrase 'foreigners everywhere' appeared in different languages alongside Mary Kisler's exhibition, *Victorian Tales of Love and Enchantment*, showing Victorian art from the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki's collection. However, unlike *Te Haerenga*, which is concerned with the idea of journeys and shared spaces, *Foreigners Everywhere* seems more of an intervention. The jarring neon penetrates the tenor of the traditional format of the exhibition, without seeking to connect with the specific formal and aesthetic properties of the paintings. However, the use of the phrase did echo the question of what is Victorian art, drawing attention to how its subjects traversed borders, thus leaving the possibility to consider how Empire underpins the construct of 'Victorian.' Victorian painting has an enduring appeal for visitors. It is often seen to be more accessible in terms of aesthetic appreciation in comparison to some aspects of contemporary art or art from other historical periods. Victorian art

in Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki is at once foreign and familiar because of its country of origin and its connection to the founding collections of Aotearoa's public art galleries.

The display of Victorian painting can be dynamic and engaging. As *Te Haerenga* shows, artworks can be conceived as the cynosure of liminal space, therefore Victorian paintings' aesthetic properties can be appreciated in cohesion with ideas aligned with contemporary notions of identities and values. Amongst the visions of imagined, and historical pasts, there is a sense of companionship with nostalgia, but there is also a timelessness that enables commentary on how fragile constructs of taste are, and how themes such as 'love' and 'death' have expression beyond conventions of a bygone era. Therefore, the invitation remains open for Aotearoa's art galleries, such as Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, to redirect the embers of the afterglow of Victorian painting into something that reflects and enlivens current dialogues in Aotearoa New Zealand society.



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## ENDNOTES

1. Peter Tomory, "Looking at Art in New Zealand," *Landfall* 12, no.2 (1958): 153.

2. Roger Fry, "The Case of the late Sir Lawrence Alma Tadema, O.M." *The Nation* 12, no.16 (1913): 667.

3. Ibid.

4. This includes the different 'hangs' of long-running exhibitions such as Passion and Politics: Two Centuries of British Art from December 2006 to July 2007.

5. Amy Harris, "Review of A Victorian Obsession: The Pérez Simón Collection at Leighton House Museum, 14 November 2014 – 6 April 2015," *Visual Culture in Britain* 16, no.3 (2015): 351.

6. Andrew Bogle and Brian Muir, *The Mackelvie Collection A Centenary Exhibition 1885-1895* (Auckland: Mackelvie Trust, Auckland City Art Gallery and Auckland Institute and Museum, 1985), 9.

7. Otago Witness (Dunedin), "Auckland News Notes (From Correspondent Auckland September 7)," September 16, 1897: 39. See also September 7, 1897, Mackelvie Trust Board Papers, NZMS 895, No. 2/1, The Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland for reference to Stone's purchase.

8. Evening Star (Auckland), "Two Fine Pictures for Auckland (From Correspondent London June 15)," July 31, 1900: 5.

9. Wall text for In Time of Peril from "Victorian Tales of Love and Enchantment" 3 September 2011 – 27 April 2014, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.

10. E.H. McCormick, "Last, Loneliest, Most Loyal" in Keith Sinclair (ed.) *Distance Looks our Way the Effects of Remoteness on New Zealand* (Auckland: Paul's Book Arcade for the University of Auckland, 1961), 107.

11. Alan Mulgan, *Home: A New Zealander's Adventure* ((London: Longmans, Green, 1927).

12. Free Lance (Wellington), "Advertisements," November 19, 1915: 10. (Stratford) and *New Zealand Herald* (Auckland), "Red Cross Art Union," June 29, 1917: 6. (Burcher)

13. Peter Tomory, *British Taste in the Nineteenth Century* (Auckland: Auckland City Art Gallery, 1962), 5.

14. McCormick, p.118.

15. Other works gifted were: A Coming Nelson, Frederick Morgan, (date unknown); Still on Top, James Tissot, (c.1873), Normanton on Soar, Leicestershire, James Orrock (1890) and three works on paper by Edward Burne-Jones.

16. William Hulme Lever, *Viscount Leverhulme by his Son* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1927), 163.

17. Ibid.

18. Lady Lever Art Gallery. "The History of the Lady Lever Art Gallery" <https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/about-lady-lever-art-gallery> [accessed November 16, 2020].

19. Alice Procter, *The Whole Picture: The Colonial Story of the Art in Our Museums & Why We Need to Talk About It* (London: Hachette, 2020).

20. Alice Procter uses the moniker 'The Exhibitionist' for these tours. As of 31/07/2020 these tours occurred at six institutions - the National Gallery, National Portrait Gallery, British Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum, Tate Britain and the Queen's House (National Maritime Museum). See <https://www.theexhibitionist.org/>.

21. Roger Blackley, "Every Picture Tells a Story Victorian Art from Australasian Collections" *Art New Zealand* Spring, no.104: (2002).

22. Auckland Art Gallery. "Te Haerenga/The Passage Exhibition Details." (2020-2021). <https://www.aucklandart-gallery.com/whats-on/exhibition/te-haerenga-the-passage?q=%2Fwhats-on%2Fexhibition%2Fte-haerenga-the-passage> [accessed January 20, 2021].

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.