BACK STORY 9

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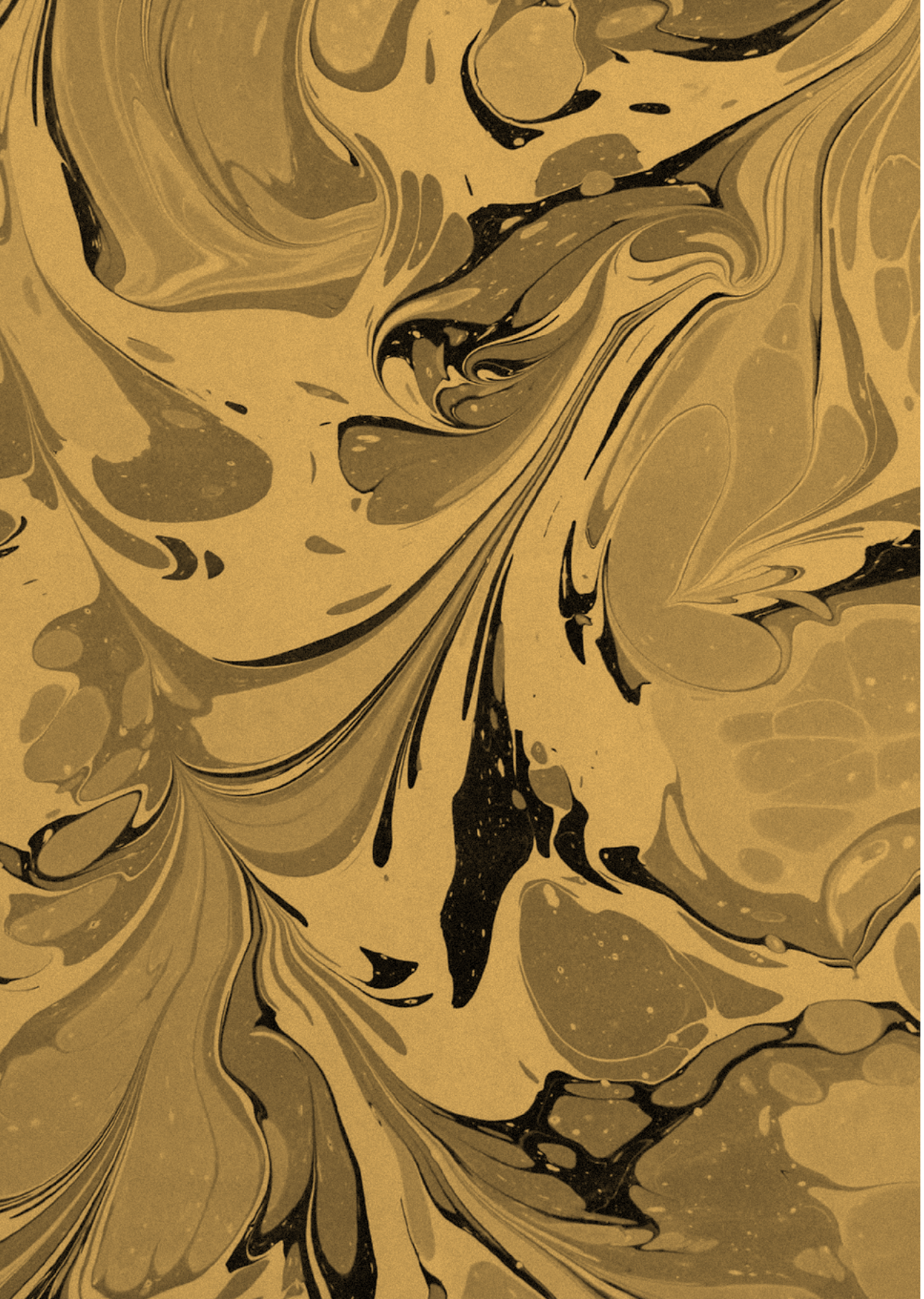
MEDIA & DESIGN HISTORY



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EDITORIAL

By Alan Cocker

The focus of BackStory is our cultural history, so it will be fascinating what future cultural historians make of 2021. The world continues to grapple with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and although Donald Trump failed to win a second presidential term in the United States at the end of 2020, liberal democracy globally has been severely challenged by a wave of 'populism'. However, this term might infer a far more cohesive political and social movement than, for example, the disparate groups such as evangelical Christians, white supremacists, anti-taxers, anti-vaxxers, climate change deniers, disgruntled rust-belt workers and the pro-gun lobby that supported Donald Trump's presidency. This coalition has been succinctly described as 'the lunatic fringe seeking to become the lunatic mainstream'.

In the face of divisive politics and a global health crisis what is the role of the artist. African-American artist Charles White was unequivocal: 'Art must be an integral part of the struggle'. This is a view that Christchurch artist Michael Reed appears to share. Dorothee Pauli writes that his concern for social justice first appeared in his work when he began to support Trade Aid in the late 1970s, and more notably so during the Springbok Rugby Tour of 1981. Reed states that the production of 'visual sedatives for the established middle-class art print market' was not the art he was interested in. Pauli argues that the artist's internationally focused and politically motivated art may well be the reason why his name does not appear more frequently in this country's mainstream arts publications.

Changing attitudes towards art is the focus of Anya Samarasinghe's look at Victorian artworks held by the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki. She writes that although there is value in exhibiting Victorian painting in its historical context, it must also be recognized that these works are open to multiple interpretations and 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.

Emerging on to the auction market in 2017 after more than a century in private hands, a Victorian portrait by Louis John Steele features the prominent Auckland settler and businessman John Logan Campbell. Jane Davidson-Ladd says that this portrait, Sir John Logan Campbell at Kilbryde (c.1902), gives us insights into the artist, his subject and their relationship. Furthermore, she argues that Steele had very ambitious aims with his portraiture to do no less than 'create an artistic vernacular particular to this country and its people'.

In her design and architecturally focused contribution to this issue, Alison Breese looks at an aspect of our cultural history that took the Victorians underground. Nineteenth century residents of Dunedin were concerned about the poor levels of hygiene in their city. They feared that conditions could replicate the urban squalor of the 'old world' they had left behind. As Dunedin grew, especially with the expansion caused by the gold rush of the 1860s, local government struggled to provide the essential sanitation infrastructure. By the turn of the twentieth century the Dunedin City Council started to plan for underground public conveniences which although more expensive than their 'above ground' counterparts, were favoured because of Victorian sensibilities that all bodily activities should be removed from view. Dunedin's underground conveniences were designed to be aesthetically pleasing and state of the art.

If the Victorian citizens of Dunedin valued the aesthetically pleasing in urban design they could well concur with the practice of New Zealand designer Peter Haythornthwaite for whom the idea of beauty and what constitutes good design are entwined. In a profile commentary Michael Barrett looks at the ideas which inform the work of 'one of this country's original design thinkers'. Barrett says that for this designer beauty through honesty of expression and resolution became something to strive for and a career-long commitment.

One of the aims of good design is to use it to promote the idea of societal advancement. The notion that design is about more than merely fashion or creating product that is more efficient to manufacture but about creating objects of beauty that also contribute to a more equitable and sustainable society. In this issue examples of art and design as positive social contributors might be a welcome antidote to the negative impacts of a pandemic and political divisiveness.

Commissioning a Visual Legacy: Louis John Steele and Sir John Logan Campbell

JANE DAVIDSON-LADD

In 2017, Louis John Steele's portrait of *Sir John Logan Campbell at Kilbryde*, c.1902, emerged on the auction market after over a century in private hands. It is a fascinating portrait of one Auckland's earliest and most celebrated Pākehā citizens. The portrait is Steele's most ambitious portrait and shows him creatively adapting the British aristocratic portrait tradition to the New Zealand context. No commissioning documents have been traced for the portrait, however a close reading of the painting alongside Campbell's papers reveal it is filled with highly personal symbolism. The provenance of the painting is also uncovered through this research. Examination of the Kilbryde portrait with Steele's five other portraits of Campbell demonstrates Campbell's desire to leave a lasting visual legacy.

KEYWORDS # Louis John Steele #John Logan Campbell # colonial portraiture # portrait commissions # legacy building # colonial aristocratic pride # Pākehā portraiture

COMMISSIONING A VISUAL LEGACY

Louis John Steele (1842-1918) painted at least six, possibly seven, portraits of Sir John Logan Campbell (1817-1912).[1] These paintings date from 1900 to about 1910. Only two are known to have been exhibited in his lifetime and little primary evidence about their commissioning and ownership exists. This paper focuses on Sir John Logan Campbell at Kilbryde, c.1902 (Figure 1). Until 2017, when the portrait came onto the auction market, it was known only through photographs of the artist (Figure 9).[2] While no manuscript material exists about its commissioning, the Kilbryde portrait is itself a remarkable source which this paper seeks to interrogate. Examination of the painting alongside Campbell's papers decode the portrait's symbolism, giving us insights into the artist, his subject and their relationship. Seen within the broader context of Steele's other portraits of Campbell, this portrait reveals Campbell's desire to leave a visual legacy. They also demonstrate Steele's ambition for portrait painting in New Zealand.

STEELE AND CAMPBELL

Steele was born in Reigate, Surrey in 1842. He trained in the 1860s, initially at the Royal Academy, London, before moving to Paris and the Ecole des Beaux Arts in 1864. There he studied under Alexandre Cabanel, exhibiting at the Paris Salon 1868-70. He returned to England in late 1870 where he produced large-scale reproductive etchings after leading artists, taught and sought to exhibit.[3] Scottish-painter and Royal Academician John Pettie testified that Steele was also "able to paint a good portrait."[4] From the time of his arrival in New Zealand in mid-1886, he quickly made his name as a portrait painter, and subsequently history painter and teacher.

When the Kilbryde portrait was painted about 1902, Campbell was one of Auckland's earliest and longest living Pākehā residents still alive. Born in Scotland in 1817 into an aristocratic family, he trained as a doctor, before emigrating. Arriving in New Zealand in early 1840, he made his fortune initially as a merchant: one half of the firm Brown and Campbell. He subsequently invested widely in land, farming, gold-mining, logging and brewing, additionally serving on the boards of key financial institutions. He made several attempts to live off his wealth in Europe, but business issues repeatedly drew him back, and in 1880 he finally decided Auckland would be his permanent home.[5] His family returned to their newly built house in Parnell, named Kilbryde

FIGURE 1. Louis John Steele, *Sir John Logan Campbell at Kilbryde*, c.1902, oil on canvas, collection of Peter and Joanna Masfen. On loan to The Northern Club, Auckland.

after his Scottish clan's castle. In 1901 he gifted his One Tree Hill estate to the citizens of New Zealand as Cornwall Park, cementing his legacy as the 'Father of Auckland.'

Steele most likely met Campbell not long after immigrating to New Zealand in 1886. Campbell was concerned by the lack of culture in New Zealand and sought to encourage the arts by funding the Free School of Art. The School was run by Kennett Watkins, with whom Steele initially collaborated, so they may well have met through him.[6] Campbell had long cultivated associations with artists, and he and Steele had shared experiences: both had sampled the delights of Florence, Paris and London; and spoke French fluently.[7] Steele was also one of very few highly trained artists permanently based in Auckland. Ever the canny businessman, Steele would have recognised Campbell as a potential client and benefactor and sought him out.

No correspondence has been found between Campbell and Steele. Campbell's biographer, Russell Stone, sounds a cautionary warning about the extent of Campbell's papers, commenting that "extensive though the papers are, they are also uneven and do not show us the whole man." Further,

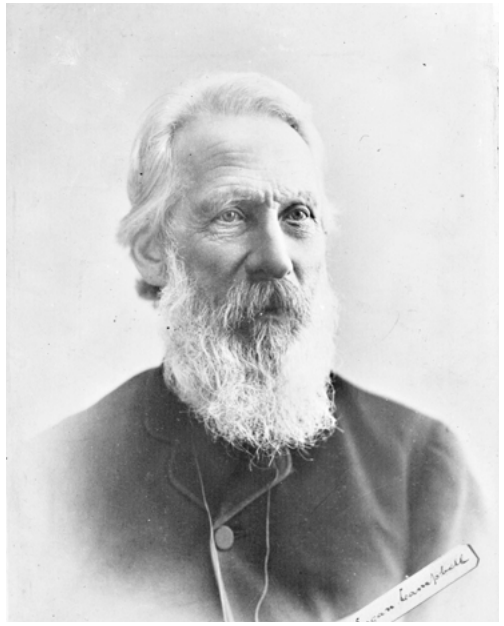

FIGURE 2. Unknown photographer, *Portrait of John Logan Campbell with autograph*, 1900 or before, Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections, 4-1364.

their "preservation has been capricious and haphazard."[8] The absence of letters may be simply enough explained by geography. Steele's studios were both on Shortland St, just paces from where Campbell had his offices, so they likely carried out their business face-to-face.[9]

A scrapbook belonging to Steele includes numerous photographs by Campbell of Kilbryde and its surrounds, and one of him reading.[10] Additionally there is a photographic print of a harem scene, for which Campbell appears to be the source.[11] Much of the material in the scrapbook book is dated 1889, so we can confidently date Steele and Campbell's association back this far at least.

STEELE'S FIRST PORTRAIT OF CAMPBELL, 1900

It was not until 1900 that Steele received his first commission to paint Campbell's portrait (Figure 3). Given Campbell's reputation as an arts benefactor, it is initially surprising that he waited this long to commission a portrait, especially when he went on to commission multiple portraits. The answer can be found in Campbell's dire financial circumstances through the late 1880s and 1890s. During this time there was a great depression in the economy. Campbell survived this only through extensive borrowing, liquidating assets and

significant personal economising.[12] Commissioning works of art would have been far from his mind.

The 1900 portrait received mixed praise when shown at the annual Auckland Society of Arts (ASA) exhibition. The *New Zealand Herald* review was complimentary, describing the likeness as "undoubtedly a successful one."[13] The *Auckland Star* was more critical, commenting: "The position is somewhat conventional, but portrait painting of this particular class does not admit much variety or originality." Adding that "It has been said that the artist has failed to catch the suspicion of a twinkle in the eyes that is invariably present."[14]

The portrait does give a rather dour impression of Campbell and is indeed very conventional, but perhaps reflects the sitter's intention in commissioning it. Most likely Campbell wanted a likeness to capture him for time immemorial. There is an enduring quality to the portrait, Campbell sits at his ease his elbow resting on a document – perhaps an allusion to his coming gift of Cornwall Park in 1901.

An explanation for the missing twinkle in his eye could be the close resemblance the portrait bears to a head and shoulders photograph of Campbell (Figure 2).[15] A deadening in the appearance of the sitter can occur when paintings are based on photographs: this presents most noticeably in blank eyes and unnaturally stiff posture. The stillness required for the initial photograph seemingly infiltrates the

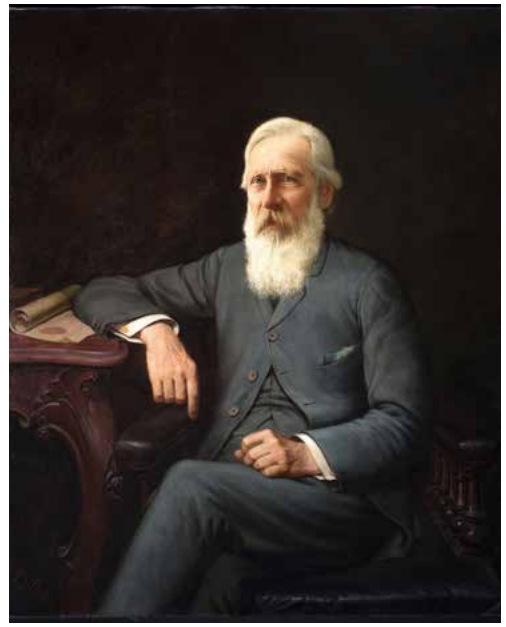

FIGURE 3. Steele, *John Logan Campbell*, 1900, oil on canvas, Cornwall Park Trust, on deposit Auckland War Memorial Museum, PA1.

painting, as seen for example in the Pākehā portraits of Gottfried Lindauer.[16] Steele frequently translated photographs into painted portraits and this wooden quality is not usually apparent in his work. However, in this instance, it can be seen in the face, but the effect is lessened by Campbell's relaxed pose.

STEELE'S KILBRYDE PORTRAIT, C.1902

Steele's second portrait of Campbell is quite original within New Zealand's art history (Figure 1). As exemplified by Steele's 1900 portrait, most Pākehā portraits produced in New Zealand were half to three-quarter-length, with a plain, usually dark, background.[17] The Kilbryde portrait, by contrast, stands out: not only is it a full-length seated portrait, the scene is enlivened by the landscape view and elaborate interior setting. The only New Zealand portrait that comes near it in terms of ambition is William Beetham's 1857-8 portrait of *Dr Featherston and the Maori chiefs Wi Tako and Te Puni* which is an impressive civic group portrait.[18] The intent of Steele's work is much more personal though, as I will show. Further, Beetham's interior relies on just the furniture, papers and books to evoke Featherston's study, with the background room only summarily indicated.

Steele's painting draws on the eighteenth-century British aristocratic portrait tradition which presented sitters in a quasi-outdoor setting in front of a landscape which symbolically referred to their estates or triumphs. Sir Joshua Reynolds' portrait of *Sir William Hamilton,* 1777, is a useful comparison.[19] The antiquarian collector and diplomat is seated in a semi-enclosed porch with a dramatic swag of rich red fabric framing the top and right sides of the painting. He is surrounded by the art treasures he collected while posted, over many years, as British envoy to Naples. He holds a volume of the lavishly illustrated series he published which documented his triumphs and discoveries as a collector. Over his right shoulder Mt Vesuvius smokes in the distance, alluding to his passion for volcanoes on which he published extensively with the Royal Society.[20]

Steele adapted this format to the colonial context. Campbell is seated by a window at Kilbryde which frames a spectacular view of his garden with the Waitemata Harbour, North Head and Rangitoto Island beyond. Gone is the ostentatious dress, and the voluminous red drapery is now literally drapes. The view depicts landmarks of the town Campbell was integral in shaping, his success modestly alluded to by his comfortable surroundings, and his fidelity indicated by

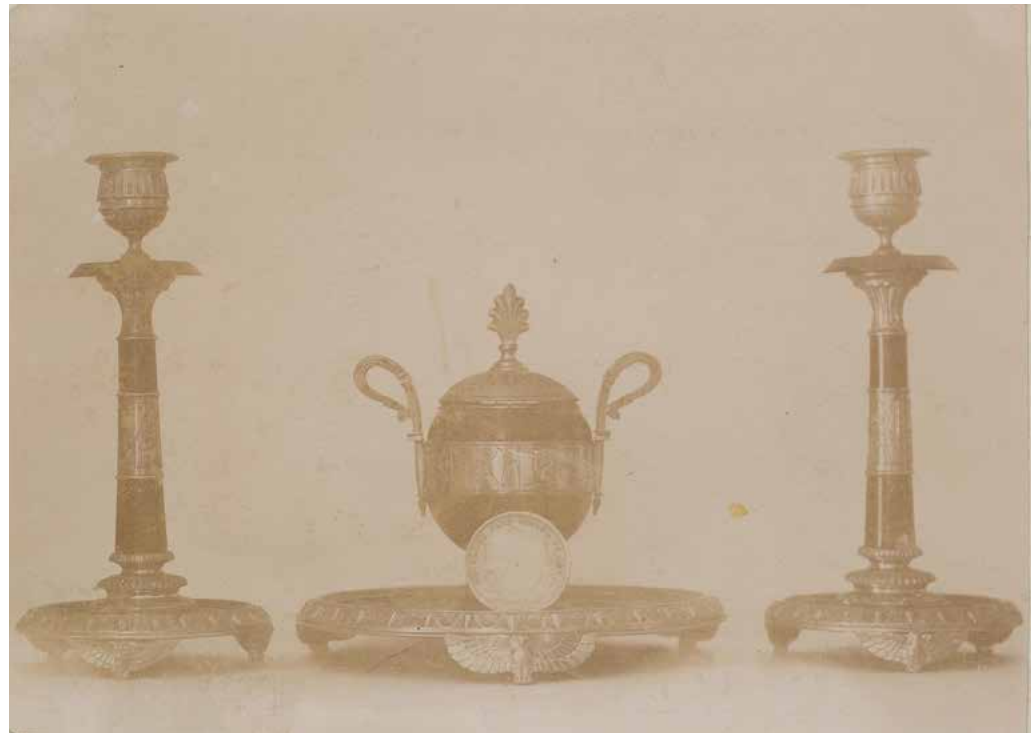

FIGURE 4. "Presentation Free School of Art," photograph of the inkstand and candlesticks presented to Campbell by the students in Campbell's "My autobiography," vol. II, p.296A. MS51-2B, Campbell Papers, Auckland Museum.

the dog at his feet. Campbell was known by this time as 'the Father of Auckland,' and the painting embodies the phrase, showing him as the town's beneficent patriarch. Yet, as the analysis below reveals, the portrait is filled with highly personal symbolism; it is much less of a civic portrait and more of a personal testament.

In the absence of commissioning documents, photographs in Campbell's papers and unpublished autobiography provide a visual key to the portrait.[21] These reveal Campbell's integral involvement in the painting. This is consistent with the commissioning of the Cornwall Park statue of Campbell. Although not officially the client, he corresponded extensively with the sculptor, Henry Pegram, including sending a memo with 12 photographs of himself.[22]

Steele's portrait is set in Campbell's home, in either the drawing room or study on the ground floor.[23] The furnishings are not studio props, rather they are found in interior photographs of Kilbryde: everything from the eccentric animal skin rug to the surprisingly fashionable oriental screen; the disordered bookcase to the opulent red curtains.[24] The dog,

too, was a part of the household, appearing in a photographic Christmas card made by Campbell.[25]

Placed centrally on the table is a small silver vessel with looped handles. Another photograph reveals that this is an inkstand presented by students of the Free School of Art in recognition of Campbell's role as benefactor (Figure 4).[26] The inkstand was highly symbolic of what Campbell felt to be a special achievement; he personally funded Auckland's first art school from 1878 to 1889. He wrote in the accompanying text, "Next to the Volunteer Rifle Inauguration I rank my Free School of Art as what I am most proud of having done in New Zealand."[27]

The prospect from the window frames Auckland landmarks, which were also redolent with personal significance. A keen amateur photographer, Campbell captured the view numerous times, including it on Christmas and birthday cards, as well as in other photographs.[28] Rangitoto was particularly meaningful; he summited the volcano on multiple birthdays until well into his 80s.[29] He concluded his "Reminiscences" with the wish "that when my last day comes…my spirit [will] hover for a brief space above the broad waters of the Waitemata to gaze on the twin peaks of Rangitoto before it is borne away for ever!"[30]

The wooded garden in the foreground was planted by Campbell. When Kilbryde was first built, the point was "bleak," "covered with tea-tree and low tough scrub."[31] Forced to let his gardeners go due to his financial circumstances in the 1880s, he slowly transformed the grounds himself.[32] The improbably top-heavy tī kōuka cabbage tree, along with the young pines, appear in the numerous photographs looking just as Steele depicted them.[33] Stone records that the blending of the New and the Old Worlds within the garden "held up a mirror to the dualism in Campbell's soul—his admiration for the ordered refinement of Europe, [and] his affection for the natural beauty of that colony where…he would live out his days."[34]

The portrait itself bears a strong resemblance to the head and shoulders photograph that was also the basis for the 1900 painting (Figure 2). Steele appears to have used the photograph as a guide rather than copying it exactly; differences can be identified in the representation of the right ear and beard for example, but much remains the same, particularly the angle of the head, the lines on Campbell's face and the fall of light. The head is somewhat awkward in relation to the body and slightly out of scale – one of the hazards of working from a photograph.

The influence of photography is also present in the composition itself. Unusually for an individual portrait, the canvas is oriented horizontally with its dimensions wider than high, recalling photographs of domestic interiors. The composition is also reminiscent of a distinctive feature of Campbell's photographic practice; he would create composite images by cutting and pasting several photographs together (Figure 5). In the illustrated example, Rangitoto appears in the background, to which he has added a balustrade and a 'cut out' of himself in a deckchair. Steele's portrait is a much more sophisticated version of the same approach, taking many elements from Campbell's life and combining them in the portrait.

Compared to Steele's other portraits, Campbell appears quite frail and small – he was in his mid-80s, so this reflected reality.[35] If Steele's intention was to create a monumental impression of the Father of Auckland, Campbell's slightness in the picture, even if real, does diminish the effect. If, however, Steele's purpose was to create a more domesticated personal perspective, this fidelity to life is consistent with such an endeavour. Other aspects such as: the relative disorder of books on the empty chair, with a folio resting on the wall behind; the casually pulled curtains; the quarter-filled waste-paper basket with folded newspaper adjacent; and the awkward angle of his right foot; all give an air of informality in line with such an approach. The clutter is that of an active man, still busily employed, despite his years.

FIGURE 5. John Logan Campbell, Christmas card, 1905, photograph, Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections, 5-1125.

On Campbell's knee a volume rests open. Stone believes this book is likely his *"Reminiscences of a long life,"* written in 1876.[36] Alternatively it could be a newspaper clippings scrapbook, which may help explain the waste-paper basket that sits under the table.[37] Campbell looks up as if disturbed, the quill lying on the opened book alluding to the task he was engaged in. Since having published *Poenamo* in 1881, in which he narrated his early years in New Zealand, Campbell nurtured the idea of himself as a man of letters. By this means, Steele captured these literary aspirations.[38]

STEELE'S 1910 PORTRAITS OF CAMPBELL

The remaining four known portraits of Campbell by Steele date from 1910.[39] The Auckland Art Gallery portrait was exhibited at the ASA that year, where it was offered for sale at £60 (Figure 6).[40] The portrait was acquired for the Gallery by the Auckland Picture Purchase Fund. A Gallery catalogue note indicates the Cornwall Park Trust paid for its acquisition confidentially.[41] The Fund's committee report singled out the painting for comment, stating how "fortunate" they felt "in being able to present a portrait of one who has done so much for the city and of who no public portrait at present exists."[42]

The *Auckland Star* review considered it an excellent likeness:

> The portrait is Sir John as we have known him of late years – white haired, but hale in old age and with a countenance filled full of intellectuality, full of interest, full of countless lines telling of the experience of so many good, useful and honourable years, but filled fullest of all with kindliness, gentleness, benevolence, and humour – in fact, a speaking likeness.[43]

Perhaps the reviewer's personal knowledge of Campbell added something to the reading, as today Campbell's look appears stern, bordering on severe.

Steele was also complimented for the "well thought" manner in which he had arranged Campbell, resulting in a "natural, very agreeable, and yet very effective pose."[44] This credit in actuality belongs to an unidentified photographer, who captured Campbell in exactly this attitude.[45] Steele followed the photograph very closely, only amending contextual details such as the transformation of the carved wooden chair into an upholstered armchair and the addition of an illustration to the page of the open book. He also altered the

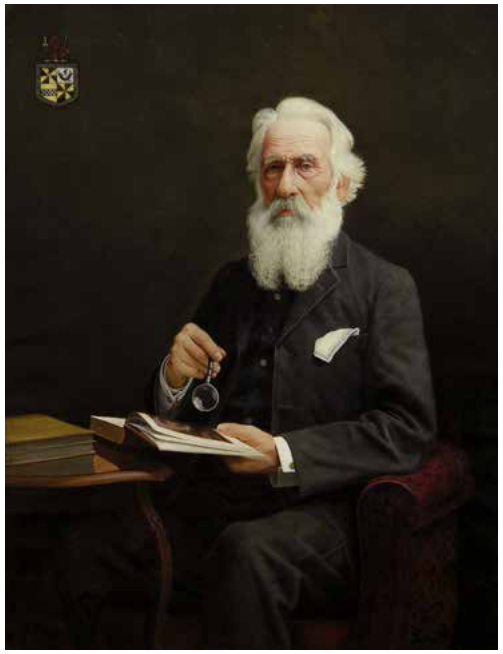

FIGURE 6. Steele, *Sir John Logan Campbell*, 1910, oil on canvas, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, gift of the Auckland Picture Purchase Fund, 1910, 1910/2.

appearance of Campbell's face: while retaining the wrinkles, Steele smoothed away the crêpe like qualities of his aged skin and tamed the frizzy hairs of his beard.

The other three portraits from 1910 depict Campbell in the Auckland Mayoral robes (Figure 7). Contemporary newspaper reports reveal that Campbell commissioned one of these portraits to send "as a gift to the head of the Campbell family."[46] This is a three-quarter length portrait with a brown background, which still hangs at Kilbryde Castle.[47] A second three-quarter length version once hung in the Campbell and Ehrenfried (C&E) offices, moving with the ownership of the firm to Lion Nathan.[48] It hung alongside its pair of the company's co-founder Louis Ehrenfried, also by Steele.[49] No commissioning documents have been found, but given that it is the same format as the Kilbryde Castle portrait, they were most likely ordered by Campbell or C&E at about the same time.[50]

The third Mayoral portrait, this time full-length set in a grand room, is today in Auckland Council's collection (Figure 7). The Council has no record of receiving it as a gift, nor is its presentation documented in the newspapers. Correspondence between Winifred Humphreys, Campbell's only surviving daughter, and Alfred Bankart, Campbell's close business associate solves the mystery.[51] When Kilbryde was

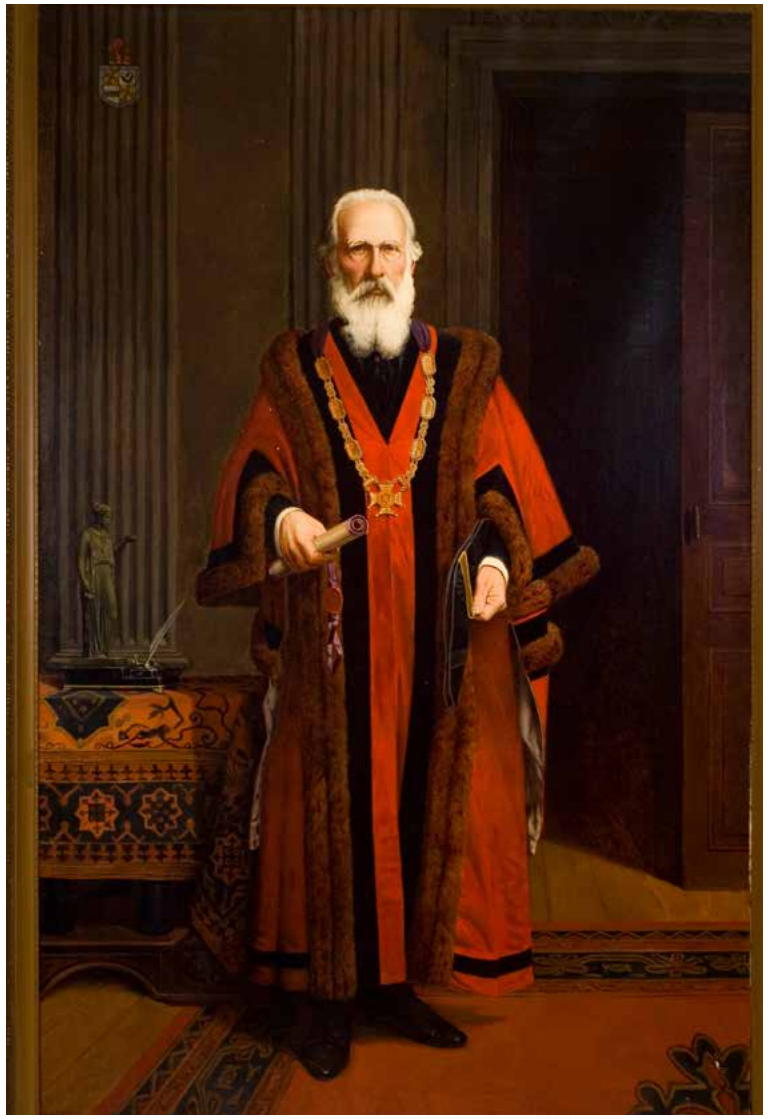

FIGURE 7. Steele, *Sir John Logan Campbell,* c.1910, oil on canvas, Auckland Council. One of three portraits by Steele depicting Campbell in his mayoral robes. The other two are three-quarter length with a plain background.

demolished in 1924, Bankart wrote to Winifred to describe its "passing."[52] He detailed a final tour with the Mayor, James Gunson. Steele's portrait was raised by Gunson:

> The full-length painting of Sir John by Steele – quite a good one – which I loaned to the City Council and which is hung in the Council Chamber is desired by the Council.[53] They ask me to present it to the City as a Gift so that it will not be removed from its present place at any time... I am very much inclined to make the Gift & so secure to the City for all time this very excellent portrait of one who was in Auckland before Auckland was Auckland!

Based on this evidence, Campbell privately commissioned the portrait to hang at Kilbryde, Parnell. Following Campbell's death, Bankart loaned the portrait to the Council. He then gifted the portrait at the Council's request in 1924.[54]

The three Mayoral portraits are based on a 1901 photograph by the firm Hanna (Figure 8).[55] This was taken during the three months Campbell served as Auckland mayor while the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York visited New Zealand. Campbell was petitioned by Auckland's citizens to take on the mayoralty during the tour as they wanted "a fitting candidate" to welcome the Royal visitors. He accepted on the condition that he act as a "figurehead" and that he only serve a three-month term during the tour.[56] Campbell had long decided to give his One Tree Hill estate to the public on his death, but this turn of events convinced him to bring forward the gift, officially presenting the park to the Duke and Duchess and naming it in their honour.[57]

FIGURE 8. Hanna, "Dr Logan Campbell, Mayor of Auckland, in his Mayoral robes," illustration from *New Zealand Graphic,* 8 June 1901, 1079. Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections, NZG-19010608-1079-2.

Steele closely follows Hanna's photograph, particularly Campbell's pose with right hand outstretched offering the deed of gift to Cornwall Park. He corrected small details, such as the uneven links of the Mayoral chain and added a ribbon and seal which hang from the document. Campbell's face is probably the aspect most changed in the painted portraits. Harshly lit from above, his head is somewhat stylised: his flat pate gives way to the rhythm of wrinkles above his brow and around his eyes, his highly groomed moustache and beard adding to the effect.

Campbell wears the newly made Auckland mayoral robes.[58] The Pegram statue shows him similarly attired. It was Campbell's view that "all modern costume…kills all statuary."[59] and he no doubt appreciated the gravitas the robes added to the portrait. Steele clearly relished the representation of the robes – a welcome alternative to the standard black suit his subjects usually wore – beautifully capturing the fall of the drapery, the play of light on the scarlet fabric and the contrasting textures of the silk and fur.

The background of the full-length Council version creates an illusion of three-dimensionality, not present in the three-quarter length versions with their warm brown backgrounds. The idea for the setting may have originated from the Hanna photograph, or he may have remembered another painting from his past. The portrait strongly recalls a work by Steele's Parisian master Alexandre Cabanel of *Emperor Napoleon III*.[60] It was shown by Cabanel at the Salon in 1865, while Steele was training under him in Paris, so he would certainly have known it.[61] Steele's room is in no way as opulent as Cabanel's but, with its wooden pilasters, is nonetheless grand for the colonies. He creates a similar feeling of space, with the open door behind Campbell, along with the receding lines of the wooden floorboards and carpet, adding to this sense of depth.

Richness and texture are added to the picture through the oriental carpet and table covering. Upon the table a large inkstand is topped by a neo-classical sculpture of the goddess Hebe.[62] The cupbearer to the gods, she is symbolic of eternal youth.[63] Painted in Campbell's 93rd year, Hebe's appearance in the portrait no doubt alludes to Campbell long-life, but there is little else revealed of his life or personality in the painting. Overall, the portrait has a grand and imposing effect that one would expect of a civic portrait, but this is at the cost of any real sense of the man portrayed.

FIGURE 9. Steele pictured in his studio with the Kilbryde portrait. This photograph is an illustration in Campbell's unpublished, "My autobiography: a short sketch of a long life, 1817-1907," vol. I, p.190A, MS-51-2A, John Logan Campbell Papers, Auckland War Memorial Museum. It is a close, but not exact, match to the photograph illustrating Steele's entry in the *Cyclopedia of New Zealand: Auckland Provincial District*, 1902.

PROVENANCE OF THE KILBRYDE PORTRAIT

While the provenance of these other portraits is straightforward, mystery surrounds the whereabouts of the Kilbryde portrait from the time it was painted until it appeared at auction in 2017. While the level of personal symbolism present in the work demonstrates that Campbell must have been intimately involved in commissioning the portrait, it is hard to know with certainty what happened to the portrait after Steele painted it. Stone is of the opinion that the painting would have certainly hung at Kilbryde up until Campbell's death, but nothing that documents this survives.[64]

There is no evidence that the portrait was ever exhibited. Prior to its re-emergence at auction in 2017 it was known only through its reproduction in the photograph of Steele that accompanied his entry in the *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, 1902.[65] Entries in the Cyclopedia were paid for by those featured in the publication, using content supplied by them.[66] His inclusion of the portrait in this photograph demonstrates that he clearly held the painting in high regard. It is as if Steele included it as a sampler to advertise his skills – not

only a portrait of a prominent citizen – it also includes landscape, animal painting, still-life elements and an interior.

There is no written record of what Campbell thought of the painting, although an almost identical photograph to Steele's *Cyclopedia* portrait, is included in his autobiography (Figure 9), which suggests a degree of approval.[67] The photograph is simply captioned: "L. J. Steele's studio." It appears in a section entirely unrelated to Steele or the portrait. While it seems natural that Campbell would want to own this photograph, no other examples of this print, or the Cyclopedia image, have been traced.[68] Two identical photographs of the painting itself are amongst Campbell's papers, but there are no inscriptions that hint at their source.[69] The most likely explanation is that Campbell took these photographs himself.

Clues to the fate of Steele's Kilbryde portrait are again found in correspondence between Campbell's daughter Winifred and Bankart, after Campbell's death in June 1912. Acting as executor of his will, Bankart wrote to Winifred asking what to do with Kilbryde and its contents.[70] An "Inventory of Furniture & Effects" recorded everything from candlesticks to curtain poles, but not works of art.[71] There is no record of Winifred requesting pieces at this time. From subsequent letters it appears, however, that Winifred must have taken some items, including the Kilbryde portrait, when setting up 'Norholme' in 1913, the Christchurch home she briefly shared with her second husband George Humphreys.[72]

By 1919, she was estranged from Humphreys and had returned to Europe. Bankart wrote to discuss the removal and sale of her furniture from Norholme.[73] The following year, reporting progress, Bankart recorded: "Regarding Steel[e]'s portrait of Sir John – I agree that this is a wretched pièce of work, & I do not blame you for not having it sent to England. I don't know how I can dispose of it, but I am having it sent to Auckland."[74] Unfortunately, Bankart gave no further detail to determine which painting he is referring to, however the description of it as "a wretched pièce of work" does assist.

The 1900 portrait (Figure 3) owned by Cornwall Park Trust is conventional, inoffensive and competently painted; it seems highly unlikely that anyone would describe it in such strong terms. Further, the balance sheets of the Cornwall Park Trust list a portrait of Campbell amongst their assets continuously from 1914, accounting for their ownership.[75]

The other four known portraits are similarly conservative and unobjectionable, and their ownership is established. By contrast the Kilbryde portrait cannot be accounted for, was unique compositionally for its time in New Zealand and the depiction of Campbell as slight may have elicited such condemnation from his daughter and close associate. Bankart recorded later the same year, "I have a note of the ultimate fate of the Marbles and the Steele photo painting", but alas no further record has been found.[76]

The Kilbryde portrait has had a polarising effect on a number of people. It seems that neither Winifred nor Bankart liked it. The 2017 vendor reports that her mother had a similar response and would not allow the portrait to be hung in the house, which is how she came to own it.[77]

The previous owner wishes to remain anonymous but shared her knowledge of the painting's history from the time it entered her family's ownership at least 45 years ago. Her father worked for companies that had associations with the Strand Arcade in Queen Street. The building was built by Arthur Myers in 1899 – one of the other directors of C&E. The Strand became the company's head office in 1914 and was also where the Cornwall Park Trust met for many years. The building remained in the ownership of the Myers family and later C&E until the mid-1970s.[78] The previous owner believes that her father must have acquired the painting through his business connections with the Strand Arcade.[79]

Based on this evidence it seems that Winifred rejected the Kilbryde portrait. Bankart returned the painting to Auckland, and stored it in either the C&E offices or storage areas in or about the Strand; and over half a century later the painting was deemed surplus to requirements and sold.

One record uncovered admits a little uncertainty. In 1917 the contents of Steele's studio were sold to cover his debts. The catalogue listed lot no. 444, "Oil Painting, Sir John Logan Campbell, L J Steele".[80] Could this be the Kilbryde portrait? It seems unlikely. The weight of evidence strongly supports the theory that the Kilbryde portrait was the "wretched pièce" that Winifred disliked and that Bankart stored at the C&E premises. If this is accepted, the 1917 auction record does mean that there was a seventh portrait of Campbell by Steele which is currently untraced.

CAMPBELL'S VISUAL LEGACY

Campbell showed great pride in having descended from the Breadalbane Campbells, who were members of the Scottish aristocracy.[81] All three versions of the Mayoral portrait, as well as the 1910 portrait in Auckland Art Gallery's collection (Figures 6 and 7), feature what Campbell termed "Ye Paternal Arms" in the top left-hand corner.[82] His grandfather was the 4th Baronet of Aberuchill and Kilbryde, but as the younger son his father had to "make his own way" in the

world, just as in turn Campbell did.[83] Campbell took great pride in what he personally achieved. In sending a version of the Mayoral portrait back to Scotland, he was asserting the extent of his triumphs in the New World to his ancestors in the Old. Stone observes that the portrait, which still hangs in Kilbryde Castle today, is "larger than any portrait of the baronets in the picture gallery, and quite dwarfing the picture of Mary Queen of Scots."[84]

This pride Campbell took in his heritage at times put him off-side with his New Zealand contemporaries who thought he and his wife put on airs which made him ill at ease in colonial society.[85] He was also ferociously defensive of his reputation throughout his career. For example, he wrote explosively from England to his New Zealand partners in late 1867 questioning why the latest Brown and Campbell advertisement individually listed every product down to calves foot jelly and red herrings. His concern was how it would reflect on him personally: "Why all the halo descending to me from my nearly three hundred years of titled ancestors could not stand against your 'calves foot jelly and red herrings'. I would be laughed out of all social position and intercourse in society with one shout of derision!"[86]

The commissioning of portraits is very much in line with such a view of self. Scotland had a strong aristocratic portrait tradition, which Campbell was familiar with through the ancestral portraits hanging at Kilbryde Castle.[87] Through his commissioning of portraits and strategic placement of them in public and private collections in New Zealand and Scotland, Campbell was consciously tapping into this tradition, ensuring that he and his achievements would be remembered.

By contrast, Campbell could also be very self-effacing. When he received his knighthood in 1902, he accepted it as "being 'conferred upon the early pioneers', rather than himself" and he preferred being called "Dr Campbell" to "Sir John."[88] Another contradictory example is the response he sent to the artist Frank Connelly who offered to sculpt a statue of Campbell to stand in the recently presented Cornwall Park. After saying he did not have the money to pay for such a statue, Campbell added, "& if I had, the making of a memorial statue of myself would be something too uniquely ridiculous."[89] Yet in his letter book there is a memo dated six months earlier titled, "How best to get a statue should one be wanted for Cornwall Park," in which he outlines obtaining just such a statue as that offered by Connelly.[90] The fact that the Cornwall Park Trust, with whom he was closely connected, confidentially paid for the 1910 portrait in Auckland Art Gallery's collection (Figure 6), again demonstrates both

Campbell's conscious desire to leave a visual legacy and wish not to flaunt his direct involvement in this legacy making.[91]

There is an inconsistency and degree of false modesty in this, which is further borne out in his autobiographical writing. These personal histories clearly were intended as a lasting record of his achievements, as were the six commissioned portraits. Campbell recognised these conflicting tendencies in himself, writing in his autobiography:

> And now for a confession after all this tirade
> of not caring a button for my Sir Johnship.
> Have I not often found myself saying to myself
> Oh! if my dear old people had only lived to
> see how the career of the only son who went
> forth from his home in 1839 to fight the battle
> of life ended in a knighthood would they not
> have been made happy. So after all I suppose
> human vanity prevailed and – I am only human
> but surely was it not a legitimate vanity.[92]

Given all of his achievements such pride was certainly reasonable. Steele's portraits are outward manifestations of this pride and offer a remarkable visual record of the man still very much lauded today.

Just as with his autobiographies, though, Campbell wanted to leave his version of history. Stone writes that Campbell's memoirs were "an exercise in self-assertion not self-revelation."[93] This can equally be said of Steele's portraits of Campbell, with the exception of the Kilbryde portrait. The Kilbryde portrait is more self-revelatory. It melds both his public persona as the Father of Auckland along with a much more personal representation of his private self. The painting is singular in New Zealand art history for its creative adaption of the aristocratic portrait tradition to the colonial context and its innovative use of photography. It is evidence of Steele's ambition to create an artistic vernacular particular to this country and its people.

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ENDNOTES

I would like to acknowledge the assistance and encouragement of Russell Stone in writing this paper, along with my father Allan Davidson.

1. For a summary of other portraits of Campbell from throughout his life, see Leonard Bell, "John Logan Campbell (1817-19112): A Career in Images," *Art New Zealand* 67 (Winter 1993): 88-96, 106.

2. "Lot 38, Sir John Logan Campbell at Kilbryde, Parnell" in International Art Centre, Important and Rare Art (Auckland: International Art Centre, 8 August 2017), 46-9

3. Steele claimed to have remained in Paris during the siege of 1870-71, but evidence suggests he returned to London taking up a position as Head Drawing Master at Blackheath Proprietary School in October 1870. J. W. Kirby, *The History of Blackheath Proprietary School* (Blackheath: The Blackheath Press, 1933), 95.

4. Testimonial letter, John Pettie to Louis John Steele, 31 January 1886, published in the Observer, 5 Oct 1889, 18.

5. R. C. J. Stone, *The Father and his Gift: John Logan Campbell's Later Years* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1987).

6. R. C. J. Stone, "A Victorian Friendship and Auckland's First School of Art," *Art New Zealand* 30 (Autumn 1984), https://www.art-newzealand.com/Issues21to30/1soa.htm [accessed 8 August 2018].

7. Stone, *The Father and his Gift*, 144, 171.

8. R. C. J. Stone, "John Logan Campbell, Frank Connelly and 'Trespiano': Literary Evidence in Biography," *New Zealand Journal of History*, no. 1 (1976): 21.

9. Steele had a studio in the Victoria Arcade from his arrival in 1886 until about 1904, when he is then listed in the Hobson Buildings. NZ City & Area Directories, 1866-1955, www.ancestory.com [accessed 6 May 2014]. Stone observes that Campbell only wrote letters to people in Auckland when writing in an official capacity, such as following up a debt, or if they were out of town. Russell Stone, conversation with author, 31 July 2018.

10. Eight pages of the scrapbook include material relating to Campbell. There are three full page images of Kilbryde, the other pages include three to five photographs. Some of these photographs include Campbell's monogram. Louis John Steele scrapbook, private collection, Whanganui.

11. Multiple copies of this print, along with similar examples, are found in Campbell's papers; presumably made to give to his friends. MS-51-324A, John Logan Campbell papers, Auckland War Memorial Museum (CP, AWMM).

12. Stone, *The Father and his Gift,* see "11: Falling into Debit," 170-181 and "13: Against the Tide," 204-223.

13. "Auckland Society of Arts Exhibition," New Zealand Herald (NZH), 18 October 1900, 6.

14. "Auckland Society of Arts," Auckland Star (AS), 22 October 1900, 2.

15. MS-51-323A-13, CP, AWMM and Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections, 4-1364.

16. Jane Davidson-Ladd, "'The Speaking Likeness': Gottfried Lindauer's Pākehā Portraits," in Gottfried Lindauer's *New Zealand: The Māori Portraits*, eds. Ngahiraka Mason and Zara Stanhope (Auckland: Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 2016), 261.

17. Ibid. A similar formula was used for most Māori portraits, although from about 1889 Steele set his Māori portraits in a whare. Lindauer occasionally suggested a generic landscape setting in his Māori portraits, but generally used a brown background.

18. William Beetham, Dr Featherston and the Maori chiefs Wi Tako and Te Puni, 1857-8, oil on canvas, Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand, acquired 1881, 1921-0001-1.

19. Sir Joshua Reynolds, Sir William Hamilton, 1777, oil on canvas, National Portrait Gallery, London, NPG 680.

20. "Sir William Hamilton," https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portraitExtended/mw02866/ [accessed 18 May 2021]. Geoffrey V. Morson, "Hamilton, Sir William," Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, https://doi-org.ezproxy.auckland.ac.nz/10.1093/ref:odnb/12142 [accessed 18 May 2021].

21. John Logan Campbell, "My Autobiography: A Short Sketch of a Long Life, 1817-1907," vol. I and II, MS-51-2A and B, CP, AWMM. Campbell's "Reminiscences" and "My Autobiography" were published as John Logan Campbell with an introduction by R. C. J. Stone, ed., *Reminiscences of a Long Life* (Mangawhai: David Ling Publishing, 2017).

22. Campbell, "Memo Re. Pegram," 1 July 1904, MS-51-287-5, CP, AWMM.

23. The arrangement of the rooms of Kilbryde are described in Stone, *The Father and his Gift*, 170. The relatively low angle of the view out to the harbour suggests the room in which he is seated was on the ground floor. A photograph of Campbell's study includes the animal skin rug upon which his feet rest, and a bookcase similar to the one behind him. However, the study window appears to be in the corner of the room and the angle of the painting would not be possible. Also, the high skirting boards and elaborated patterned wallpaper do not feature in the photograph of the study but are seen in other rooms. Stone, *The Father and his Gift*, illustration ff. 97.

24. The screen appears in a photograph of a bedroom in Campbell, "My Autobiography," vol. I, cxix, MS-51-2A, CP, AWMM; the curtains in a full-length photographic portrait of Campbell at Kilbryde, undated, MS-51-323A-14, CP, AWMM.

25. "My Autobiography," vol. II, 349A, MS-51-2B, CP, AWMM.

26. Ibid, 296A.

27. Ibid, 340.

28. Campbell's interest in photography is not well documented. He was a founding member of the Auckland Camera Club, established in 1885, and is associated with its later incarnations. "Campbell, John Logan," Photographers Database, Auckland Libraries, http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/dbtw-wpd/photographers/

basic_search.htm [accessed 18 May 2021]. Campbell had a dark room at Kilbryde and numerous photographs in his papers are attributable to him. He frequently included a monogram featuring his initials in pictures of Kilbryde and its surrounds. For the dark room, see "Kilbryde Inventory of Furniture and Effects," 1912, MS-51-10; for photographs by Campbell see MS-51-323 through MS-51-325, CP, AWMM.

29. Campbell with an introduction by Stone, Reminiscences, 302.

30. Ibid, 251. I am grateful to Russell Stone for pointing out this passage and the significance of Rangitoto to Campbell.

31. "The Man Whom Auckland Honours… An Interesting Biographical Sketch," NZH, 24 May 1906, 7.

32. Stone, *The Father and his Gift*, 171.

33. For photographs of Kilbryde garden see MS-51-324D and E, CP, AWMM.

34. Stone, *The Father and his Gift*, 171.

35. Campbell recorded in 1904 that his height was only five feet eight inches. Campbell, "Memo Re. Pegram," 1 July 1904, MS-51-287-5, CP, AWMM.

36. Stone, conversation with the author, 2 August 2017. An illustration of Campbell's original bound manuscript is in Campbell with an introduction by Stone, Reminiscences, 9.

37. Including a rubbish bin in a painting is highly unusual; it may be a nod to Campbell's habit of scrapbooking clippings, the unused newspaper ending up in it.

38. He referred to himself as possessing "a literary turn of mind." Stone, *The Father and his Gift*, 230.

39. Another apparent Steele portrait is in fact a replica of the C&E portrait mentioned below. It was painted by Michael Young in 1983 and presented to the Northern Club by Sir Kenneth Myers. It is attributed to Steele in R. C. J. Stone, ed., *Poenamo Revisited: A Facsimile of the 1898 Edition of Poenamo by Sir John Logan Campbell* (Auckland: Godwit, 2012), 265.

40. Auckland Society of the Arts, Catalogue of the Twenty-Ninth Annual Exhibition (Auckland: Auckland Society of Arts, 1910), 11.

41. "(Confidential) Presented by the Auckland Picture Purchase Fund, 1910 – CORNWALL TRUST)." Louis John Steele, Portrait of Sir John Logan Campbell, 1910/2, Green Catalogue Card, New Zealand collection, Auckland Art Gallery, undated. These cards predate the Gallery's collection databases and were created and subsequently added to by staff as part of the documentation of the collection. The work is not included in the Gallery's accessions register.

42. "Art for the City," AS, 29 July 1910, 6.

43. "Auckland Society of Arts," AS, 28 May 1910, 8.

44. Ibid.

45. MS-51-323C-17, CP, AWMM.

46. "Local and General News," NZH, 30 July 1910, 6.

47. Sir James Campbell, 9th Baronet of Aberuchill and Kilbryde, email to author, 12 June 2018.

48. These portraits are now in an associated private collection.

49. Louis Ehrenfried died in April 1897. His nephew Arthur Myers took over his share of the firm.

50. The C&E Minute books do not have any references to the commissioning of these portraits. The portrait of Louis Ehrenfried is assumed to have been commissioned contemporaneously with the Campbell portrait, as he died in 1897. The Campbell portrait must post-date the June 1901 photograph upon which it is based. Campbell and Ehrenfried, Directors' Minute Book, 1897-1912. NZMS 1423, box 3, 2/3/1, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries.

51. Bankart was company secretary at C&E, a member of the Cornwall Park Trust, one of the executors of Campbell's will and also managed Winifred's affairs in New Zealand.

52. Alfred Bankart to Winifred Humphreys, letter, 31 July 1924, MS-51-335, CP, AWMM.

53. The full-length portrait cannot have been the portrait listed amongst the Cornwall Park Trust's assets, as that work continued to be listed amongst its assets beyond the 1924 gifting to the Council referred to in this letter. See "Cornwall Park Trust," AS, 15 May 1926, 12.

54. The lack of records suggests this was a gentleman's agreement. No references to the gift of the portrait were found in the following: ACC272 Council Minutes Indexes, no. 29 (1923-4) and no. 30 (1924-5); and ACC108 Library Committee Minutes 1912-1956, both Auckland Council Archives. There are no Town Clerk letter files or letter books that survive from this period. Nor is there any information in the art work file, Louis John Steele, Sir John Logan Campbell, G001 2005 214 1, Auckland Council Archives.

55. J. R. Hanna, "Dr Logan Campbell, Mayor of Auckland, in his Mayoral robes," NZ Graphic, 8 June 1901, 1079. The portrait is likely to have been taken by John Robert Hanna.

56. Stone, *The Father and his Gift*, 238-9.

57. Ibid, 240.

58. Ibid, 239.

59. Campbell to Austin Strong, letter, 13 August 1904, MS-51-272-8, CP, AWMM.

60. Alexandre Cabanel, Emperor Napoleon III, 1865, oil on canvas, Musée National du Château, Compiègne, France.

61. Andreas Blühm, ed., *Alexandre Cabanel: The Tradition of Beauty* (Cologne and Munich: Wallraf-Richartz-Museum and Hirmer Verlag, 2011), 115.

62. The inkstand has not been traced, but Hebe is based on Bertel Thorvaldsen's 1816 statue of the goddess. See Bertel Thorvaldsen, Hebe, 1816, A874, Thorvaldsen's Museum, https://thorvaldsensmuseum.dk/en/collections/work/A874 [accessed 10 July 2018].

63. Robert Christopher Towneley Parker, "Hebe," The Oxford Classical Dictionary (3 rev. ed.), eds., Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth, online edition, 2005.

64. Stone, interview with the author, 31 July 2018.

65. "Steele, Louis John," *Cyclopedia of New Zealand: Auckland Provincial District*, vol. II (Christchurch: Cyclopedia Company, 1902), 321.

66. New Zealand Electronic Text Centre, "The Cyclopedia of New Zealand," http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-corpus-cyclopedia.html#name-412283-1 [accessed 6 July 2018].

67. Campbell, "My Autobiography," vol.I, 190A, MS-51-2A, CP, AWMM.

68. Steele may have been the source or, given his interest in photography, Campbell could have been the photographer.

69. MS-51-323C-6 and MS-51-323C-6 duplicate, CP, AWMM.

70. Bankart to Winifred Murray (Humphreys from 1913), telegram, 15 August 1912, MS-51-334, CP, AWMM. Bankart to Murray, letter, 16 September 1912, MS-51-334, CP, AWMM.

71. "Inventory of Furniture and Effects in and about the Residence of Sir John Logan Campbell Kt. 'Kilbrdye' Parnell," 27 June 1912, typescript, MS51-10, CP, AWMM.

72. Winifred's first marriage to Herbert Murray ended in 1900, she remarried George Humphreys in July 1913. The marriage did not last the year.

73. Bankart to Humphreys, letter, 21 July 1919, MS-51-335, CP, AWMM.

74. Bankart to Humphreys, letter, 1 March 1920, MS-51-335, CP, AWMM. The contents of Norholme was sold in April 1920. Christchurch Press, 9 April 1920, 10. Oil paintings were included in this, but none were individually listed as might be expected of a portrait of a well-known figure, further Bankart's letter records his intention to take the portrait to Auckland.

75. These were published periodically, including: NZH, 31 July 1914, 4; AS, 15 June 1915, 12; NZH, 1 May 1920, 12; and AS, 15 May 1926, 12.

76. Bankart to Humphreys, letter, 24 August 1920, MS-51-335, CP, AWMM.

77. Anonymous vendor, conversation with author, 31 July 2018. She explained that she first encountered the portrait in her parent's basement wrapped in a cloth. Her father wished to have the painting in the house, but her mother did not like it.

78. "Strand Arcade," New Zealand Heritage List, http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/123 [accessed 14 August 2018].

79. This closely accords with the provenance of a C&E branded mirror in AWMM's collection. According to the catalogue, "Everything that came out of the pubs was put into storage beneath their NZ Wines & Spirits store in Wellesley St." Lady Margaret Myers, who undertook the interior decorating of the hotels, invited the donor to accompany her to the store "where Lady Myers asked her if there was anything there she would like as it wasn't being used." Campbell & Ehrenfried Co. Ltd, Mirror Advertising Sign, 2015.92.1, AWMM, http://www.aucklandmuseum.com/collections-research/collections/record/am_humanhistory-object-795925 [accessed 8 August 2018].

80. Catalogue of Sale: The Whole of the Valuable Collection Pictures Works of Art Maori & Island Curios etc. The Property of L. J. Steele, Esq. Artist (Auckland: Richard Arthur & Co., 1917), 15.

81. Stone, *The Father and his Gift*, 28, 68, 177, 228, 242.

82. Campbell, "My Autobiography," vol. I, 8A, MS-51-2A, CP, AWMM.

83. R. C. J. Stone, "Campbell, John Logan," Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, 1st pub. 1990. Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1c3/campbell-john-logan [accessed 20 May 2021].

84. Stone, *The Father and his Gift*, 259.

85. Ibid, 227.

86. Campbell to James Mackelvie and Andrew Wardrop, letter, 31 October 1867 reproduced in ibid, 66.

87. Further, a portrait of Campbell was commissioned by his family before he emigrated. Mungo Burton, Dr John Logan Campbell, 1838, oil on canvas, Paul Mellon Collection, Yale Centre for British Art, B1974.3.2. See Bell, "John Logan Campbell," Art New Zealand, 88 and 91-2.

88. Stone, *The Father and his Gift*, 242. "My Autobiography," vol. II, 402, MS-51-2B, CP, AWMM.

89. Campbell to Connolly, letter, 14 March 1902, quoted in Stone, *The Father and his Gift*, 247. Campbell's emphasis.

90. John Logan Campbell, "Memo," 2/22[?] October 1901, Letter book, 1881-1904, 419 verso, MS-51-128, CP, AWMM. As we have seen such a statue was made in Campbell's lifetime, although it was paid for by public subscription.

91. Campbell attended meetings of the Cornwall Park Trust up until the Park's opening in 1903. Jesse Stratford, Place Manager, Cornwall Park, email to author, 20 May 2021. The Trust Board members included his business partner Arthur Myers and close associate Alfred Bankart.

92. "My Autobiography," vol. II, 403, MS-51-2B, CP, AWMM.

93. Stone, *The Father and his Gift*, 135.

What Lies Beneath? The History of Underground Public Conveniences in Dunedin 1910-1929

ALISON BREESE

Turn-of-the-century public conveniences are more than just reminders of a now common public service. The early twentieth century saw enormous transformation in the approach to public conveniences in New Zealand, evident in the changing architectural approaches in their design, construction and visibility. They brought challenges to Dunedin and its local authority, Dunedin City Council. Tasked with their supply, the Council was required to not only invest heavily but also commit to this public provision. This article looks at the establishment and the reasons for the decline of the popularity and use of the underground conveniences.

KEYWORDS # Conveniences # Toilets # Built Heritage # History # Dunedin # Sanitation # Architecture.

PUBLIC OPINION AND ABOVE GROUND CONVENIENCES

Nineteenth century residents and local authorities alike were concerned with the poor level of hygiene or outright filthiness in Dunedin. The new colonists feared that conditions could fall to the "Old World" standards and that Dunedin would duplicate the diseases and cramped conditions of 'Home'[1]. Dunedin slowly developed in the 1850s, and the Dunedin Town Board (1855-1865) struggled to establish roading and sanitation infrastructure. Further to this the Otago goldrush hit in 1862, and the town expanded rapidly with an influx of people from all over the world. It took fourteen years after the first Europeans settled in Dunedin for the Board to erect Dunedin's first public convenience in 1862[2]. As the city grew from the success and wealth created by the goldrush, by the 1870s Dunedin was the largest and wealthiest city in New Zealand. Over the next 45 years the city of Dunedin's population had grown to 36,068, yet there were only ten conveniences across Dunedin. All ten were exclusively for male use.

Members of the public expressed their concern in the newspapers of the day. Topics included the lack of provision and the state of conveniences, with 'E.H' noting in 1900 that the "public urinals are a disgrace; very often over the boot tops in filthy water"[3]. These concerns were heightened in 1900 when a new wave of the bubonic plague began sweeping the globe.

Against this background, and to meet the ever-increasing demand, Dunedin City Council finally built four above ground urinals in 1904. All were in prominent public locations. The Council's efforts, however, caused even more complaints. One convenience in particular raised public ire: the Frederick Street iron convenience. The editor of the *Otago Daily Times* under the title "A Public Eyesore" opined that the Council should be beautifying the city but were doing the opposite by placing the unattractive structures in high profile areas[4]. G.L. Denniston led a deputation from neighbouring Knox Church urging the Council to remove the urinal, arguing that "It was an ugly building, it was a menace to traffic, and it was placed in a position where it could not fail to be offensive to the large number of women and children"[5]. S.M. Park from the Knox Church Deacon's Court believed it was in the interests of public morality and decency for it to be built elsewhere, away from the boys and girls who attended the Sunday School[6]. Park went on to suggest that if a convenience was needed in that location, it should be put underground.

FIGURE 1. The Triangle (now Queens Gardens) 1879, showing a brick urinal, Te Papa Collections

In Victorian society, underground conveniences were favoured because they were 'hidden'. The European philosophy that all bodily activities should be removed from view was particularly influential and led to an international trend in underground facilities[7]. As is exemplified by Knox Church's Deacon's Court, Dunedin's Edwardian society was in accord with international trends. Public urination was indecent. The public toilet may be the only appropriate place for these bodily functions, but it was completely inappropriate to have situated near home or place of business[8].

While numerous Council members were no doubt sympathetic to these arguments, the Council was limited in its ability to action the request for undergrounds. An iron above ground design cost £70; an underground convenience cost £1500. The difference was significant and fiscal realities imposed the economic above ground urinals on a reluctant community.

THE UNDERGROUNDS PROPOSED

In 1904, however, an important turning point in the public toilet discussion occurred when Richard Watkins Richards was appointed to the dual role of Town Clerk and City Engineer of the Dunedin City Council[9].

Richards was born in Pembroke, Wales in 1863 and emigrated to Australia as a child. He was appointed City Surveyor

for Sydney in 1887. In 1902 he left the Sydney City Council to work in private practice as a civil and consulting engineer. Two years later Richards took the appointment at Dunedin City Council in New Zealand[10]. Recently arrived from Sydney, he had seen the increasing importance authorities had placed on public health and sanitation in the wake of Australia's first bubonic outbreak. Indeed, Richards had been tasked with designing and building Sydney's first underground convenience in May 1901[11]. In the Dunedin public sanitation debate then, Richards could speak from experience concerning the options for public conveniences for Dunedin[12].

Richards opinions were recorded in the Dunedin City Council Departmental Reports of 1905-06. Richards urged the Council to consider underground conveniences. Sydney City Council had commissioned Richards to visit Europe in 1896 to report on various aspects of municipal government there and he noted that underground structures had displaced the "unsightly arrangements" of the above ground facilities. Using Birmingham's underground facilities as an example, he outlined the charging model which provided a continuous income after the initial outlay. Richards argued that Dunedin was well suited for the construction of the underground conveniences because of its many open spaces. He also argued that underground facilities would enable Dunedin to build a reputation as a well-kept, well-appointed modern city - an ideal many held as important[13]. Despite Richards' voice of reason, the Dunedin City Council took no action. This inaction saw the public increasingly voice their frustration about the conveniences in the local newspapers.

Despite his initial failure, Richards persisted with his argument. In 1907 he presented to the Dunedin City Council a comprehensive "voluminous" report, outlining and fully specifying the construction of modern underground conveniences[14]. With the Works Committee's support, the report was sent to Council. The Committee advised that "Council to be recommended to erect public conveniences for ladies and gentlemen at the Octagon; cost not to exceed £1500"[15].

The report was discussed at length in the July 1907 Council meeting. Councillors were divided over the advantages of the underground options and the cost. The subterranean spaces were described in the newspaper as "superstructures" and had the cost to go with them[16]. Richards argued that underground conveniences were costly but could be more economically constructed than overseas ones. Dunedin could still maintain the high sanitary conditions and easy maintenance of similar international structures, while saving on construction costs.

The report was the final nail in the coffin of Council opposition. In July 1907, the Council instructed Richards to begin preparing plans and specifications for two underground conveniences, working to a cost of around £1500. Only one month later, the Council voted to defer the works to the next year's financial allocations[17].

Over the next year, debate continued to swirl around the lack and the state of the existing public toilets. One of the loudest debates centred on the lack of conveniences for women, which was common across the western world.

Dunedin City Councillor Keast reporting on a recent trip to Melbourne, stated that he was impressed by many things in the Australian city, but most particularly the underground conveniences provided for *both* sexes. He concluded that: "Some of the conveniences here would not be tolerated for a moment there"[18]. Councillor Barr leant his support after viewing Christchurch's underground conveniences. Built in 1907, the first in New Zealand, they were hidden at the rear of the Godley Statue in Cathedral Square, Barr found them 'admirable' in every way.

It was not until 1909 that a special fund was finally allocated by the Finance Committee to 'special works' for the city to the value of £4795[19]. It was confirmed on 10 February 1909 that the fund was for the "execution of city works to be hereafter specified"[20]. With the financial resources guaranteed, the Dunedin City Council finally took the decision to build two underground conveniences in Dunedin. Most significantly, one would be erected for women[21]. Long overdue, the Council's decision was generally welcomed.

The first locations for underground conveniences were chosen because of their central position and, importantly, their potential to 'hide' the facilities[22]. The City Engineer was dispatched to inspect the two proposed sites for their suitability; the lower Octagon, near the Thomas Burns Monument and the Custom House Square, under the Cargill's Monument. Equally important was space for the above ground shrubbery and rockeries, which played a large and important part in 'hiding' patrons from the public as they entered the facilities. The Engineer reported back to Council with positive reports that both sites would be suitable for what he saw as current and future use[23].

As well as being practically invisible, Dunedin's underground conveniences were designed to be aesthetically pleasing and state of the art. By the time of the death of King Edward VII in 1910, water closet and urinal styles had changed from the fancy decorative style of the Victorian age. Early twentieth century design brought a more austere, functional approach, and the elaborate ornamentation of the Victorian age had given way to plainer, more rounded designs. Water closets were now clean and uncluttered, and lavatories were more discreet on simple pedestals. There were practical reasons for this - it was easier to keep clean and less likely to get dirty.

Following international trends, Dunedin's new conveniences contained urinals and closets produced from the Twyford company: the No 7 'Adament' urinal range and the white closet 'Sentinel' washdown product[24]. The Twyford Company was among the first of the great sanitarians in England. They were contemporaries of George Jennings, who invented the first public flush toilets and designed the first underground public convenience, and Thomas Crapper, who founded a sanitary equipment company and invented the s-bend trap in 1880. Twyford's inventions were hailed as landmarks during the course of domestic sanitary reform[25]. Dunedin's new underground conveniences, again following international trends, were decorated in a simple colour palette. Most tiles were ordered in plain white and direct from 'Home'. The interiors in the underground facilities were fitted with wall to ceiling tiles for easy cleaning. Skirting and dados were enriched with cornice tiles. The Custom House Square convenience was more decorative than the Octagon facility, with an ornamental "Florite" frieze (possibly in coloured tiles) and dado.

The 'Adament' range of urinals were made from porcelain enamelled fireclay with an automatic flush cistern developed in 1889. These became extremely popular around the world. The large, hexagonal 'Adament' urinal could accommodate six in comfort, beneath a little tower, like a cupola, on top[26]. Dunedin did not have the hexagonal style, instead the 'Adament' urinals used in the Octagon undergrounds were built parallel against an exterior wall. The Custom House Square urinals had five urinals back to back with a more decorative top cupola.

Woodwork was also used to aesthetic effect. Cupboards and towel rollers were made from kauri and all the joinery work was completed in Tasmanian wood[27]. The seats in the attendant's spaces were also made from kauri and there

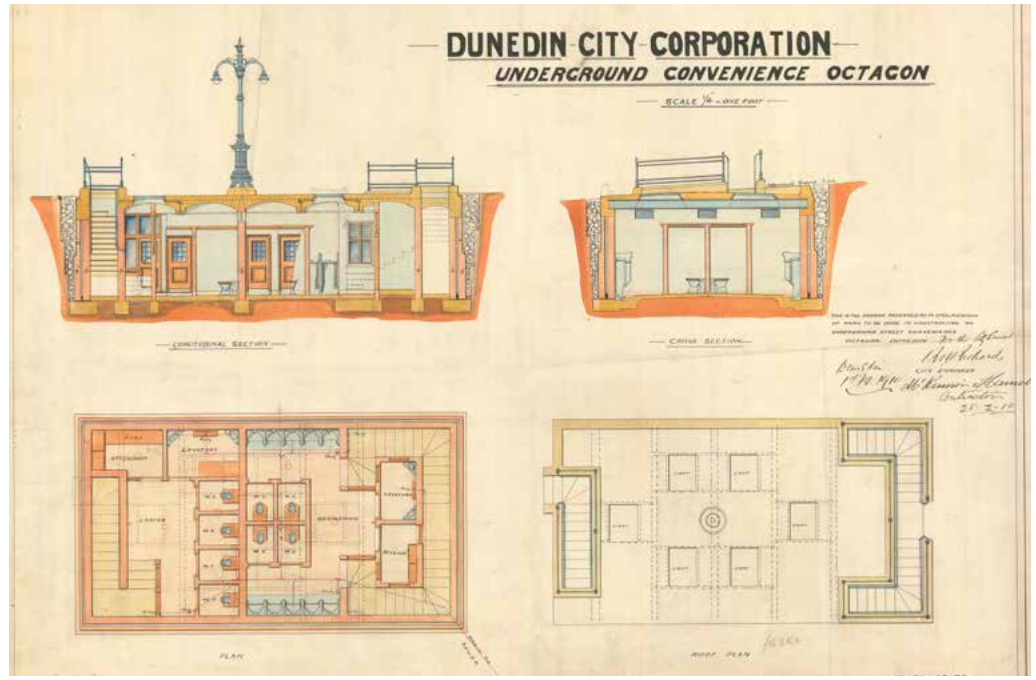


FIGURE 2. Octagon Underground Convenience Plans
1909, Plan 4427, City Engineers, DCC Archives

were brass coat and hat hooks, as well as electric heaters and looking glasses installed.

While these spaces were designed with modernity and privacy in mind, the challenges of being underground meant they had to be constructed to withstand their subterranean environment. The roof was designed to withstand the overhead traffic, and the walls and floors needed to be watertight to hold back the water table. Bitumen lined the walls to ensure they were waterproof [28]. Rainwater from the street above had to be stopped from running down the stairs. On occasions when the conveniences did flood, water had to be pumped out[29]. Waterproofing efforts unfortunately proved less than successful: The Custom House Square underground conveniences suffered from leaks as soon as 1912, and the Octagon facilities had battled storm water leaks for some time before it was officially reported in March 1919[30]. As time went on the Octagon site continued to suffer numerous problems with leaks.

Ventilation was also very important in the subterranean spaces and the toilets had uptake ventilation pipes to the streets above. These were necessary fixtures but were also decorative with the cast iron bases of the ventilation pillars displaying ornamental patterns[31]. Ventilation in the Octagon undergrounds unfortunately proved ineffective and a fan and electric motor were installed in 1919[32].

These underground conveniences relied on artificial lighting with the spaces having skylights to let the natural light in and pavement lights with glass lens lights[33]. Outside gas lamps and later electric lights were used to light the accessway and stairs, burning day and night.

CONSTRUCTION BEGINS

Contractors McKinnon and Hamilton won the tender for the Octagon men's and women's undergrounds with a price of £1610. The tender included the provision of ten urinals, four water closets and lavatory (hand basin) for gentlemen and four water closets and lavatory for women, with room for attendant accommodation[34]. The central location provided separate entrances for 'Ladies' and 'Gentlemen' down into the adjoining conveniences and both facilities had similar aesthetics[35].

Mr A. Ferry, Roslyn, won the contract for the Custom House Square conveniences with the tender of £1130. Designed for men only, the convenience was to include ten urinals, two water closets and lavatory with accommodation for an attendant. A later modification saw a wash basin built in lieu of a water closet[36]. This convenience was £480 cheaper than the dual use Octagon convenience but was more decorative according to the specifications[37].

With an estimated build time of six months, the Custom House Square undergrounds opened on time with little fanfare in the city on 8 November 1910. The Octagon undergrounds officially opened a few weeks later on 20 December 1910[38].

The Finance Committee's 1909 special fund allowed for a third, and simpler, underground in London Street[39]. Built in 1910, the third convenience was located outside the Albert Arms Hotel. It was in a more prominent location, on the street corner of a busy intersection. The London Street underground convenience, designed for male use only, had no shrubbery nor any monuments to obscure it. Ferry again won the contract with a tender of £565 13s[40]. The London Street convenience opened in 1911.

Despite the lack of fanfare, the public soon made their support of the underground facilities obvious. Within a few short weeks, the numbers availing themselves of the conveniences proved there was an enormous demand. Shortly after the Octagon and Custom House Square facilities opened, the numbers were tallied – the conveniences were used 42,720 times in the first four weeks. Dunedin's population at the time was 41, 432[41].

Within six months, the Custom House conveniences were expanded due to the demand. Three more water closets were

FIGURE 3. Manor Place urinals interior, taken 2017, Alison Breese

FIGURE 4. Virtual Rendering of the interior of Octagon Undergrounds created using original specifications and plans 1909, by Michael Findlay 2017

built. The lavatory and attendants' areas were also enlarged[42].

To help cover costs and generate income, Dunedin followed the European practice of the "penny in the slot", to unlock the automatic locking system. The system was monitored by the attendants. Urinals were free. For a small installation cost, the locks raised substantial funds[43]. Within four weeks of opening, the two main undergrounds brought in an income of £28. This went some way to cover the running costs. The undergrounds were a significant financial commitment for a local authority and generating income ensured there were resources for ongoing maintenance and staffing.

The General Committee's statistical and financial information is fragmentary. There are no records contained in the archives other than opening income, and numbers that were recorded in the newspaper. Consistent reporting only began in 1916 within the Council's Annual Reports. Reports in the following years indicate that the Ladies conveniences in the Octagon were generating the most income - a logical finding given that water closets had to be paid for, while men could use the urinals for free.

Although the records are generally fragmented, for a short period the Dunedin City Council Annual Reports included the expenditure on all public conveniences in relation to the income the undergrounds were generating. As is evident in the table below, there was a significant gap between income and maintenance costs causing financial strain for the local authority.

YEAR	INCOME FROM UNDERGROUNDS	EXPENDITURE ON ALL PUBLIC FACILITIES
1917-18	£451 3 2	£1161 6
1917-18	£463 7 11	£1197 18
1917-18	£659 13 5	£1320 12 13

SOURCE. *Dunedin City Council Departmental Reports, DCC Archives*

ABOVE GROUND CONVENIENCES

While underground conveniences were being built, the Dunedin City Council also continued to build more above ground facilities to keep up with demand. The Manor Place conveniences built in 1912, were one such example. These conveniences still stand on the corner of Manor Place and

FIGURE 5. Octagon Underground Comfort Station, Ladies Entrance 1919, DCC Archives

FIGURE 6. Custom House Square Underground Comfort Station, 1919, DCC Archives

Princes Street. A structure with urinals had been on the site for many years, but in 1912 a petition signed by concerned neighbouring residents and ratepayers complained about the existing structure. They called for an underground convenience for both sexes, especially necessary for its proximity to two of the City Reserves and the proposed upgrade for the Oval Reserve[44].

The site was also the only public urinal between Jetty Street and Kensington. Chief Building Surveyor G.W. Gough agreed that a more modern structure could replace the old one. Using the special fund money allocated in 1909, the Council agreed to a new modern above ground convenience - for men[45].

Mr A. Ferry won the contract to build the Manor Place convenience at a cost of £295, complete with Twyford's stoneware and the Twyford's Adament design[46]. The Manor Place urinals lined the exterior walls and formed the octagonal shape of the structure itself, mirroring the city's prominent landmark. Shrubbery was placed around the above ground station, to provide concealment for self-conscious patrons. The City Engineer later described the Manor Place structure as an "object of beauty, draped as it is in lovely native shrubs"[47].

The local petitioners' concerns, however, were only partly addressed and there were ongoing fears that above ground facilities were detrimental to the areas in which they were situated. They may have been provided with a new modern convenience, but it was not underground - nor were any facilities supplied for women. The Council, for its part, had chosen the cheaper above ground structure as the special fund allocated only allowed limited works to be completed.

THE ATTENDANTS

It seemed the number of conveniences, especially those designed for women's use, would continue to be limited by the underground's significant drain on financial resources - for example, the need for attendants. Like other cities, Dunedin City Council employed attendants to run and maintain the underground conveniences. There were four male and two female attendants initially stationed in the Octagon conveniences and male attendants at the Custom House Square conveniences, who worked shift hours. Dunedin's other facilities had visiting attendants. Council decided that the attendants had to be old 'servants' of the Corporation or a widow of an ex-staff member of the Corporation[48]. The original job applications remain in the Dunedin City Council

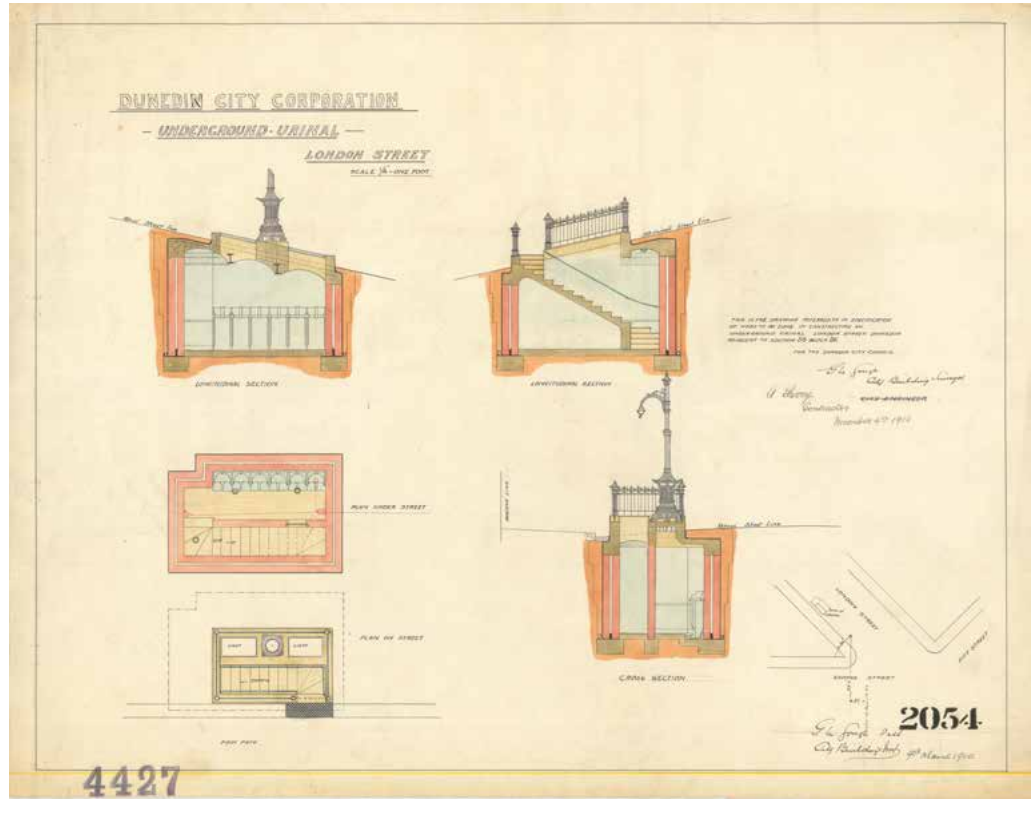


FIGURE 7. London Street Underground Conveniences, Plan 4427, City Engineers 14/2/2ba

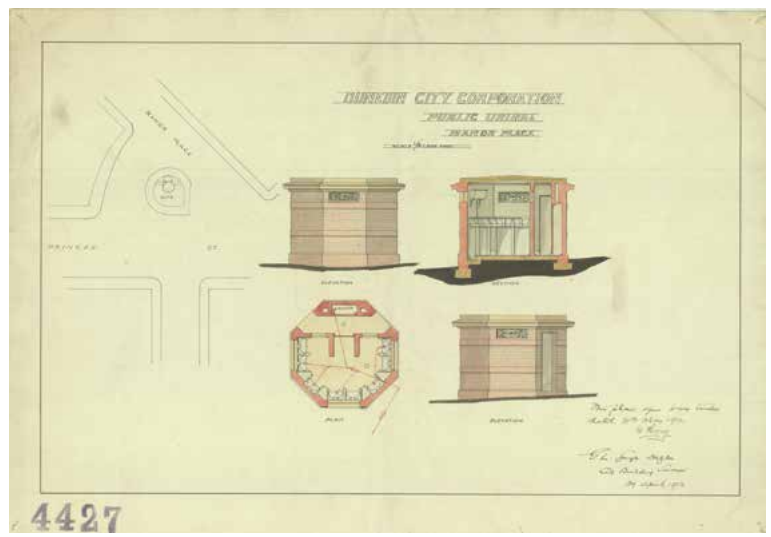


FIGURE 8. Manor Place Convenience Plans, 1912, DCC Archives, City Engineers 14/2/2/d

Archives, indicating these positions garnered a surprising degree of interest.

The attendants were essential to keep the undergrounds in a hygienic state. They also managed behaviour and security within the subterranean spaces, which were prone to a certain degree of ill-mannered behaviour. Required to work eight hours a day, seven days a week they received 12 days leave a year on full pay. The attendant role was essentially "caretakers work and not arduous" reported the Town Clerk in 1912[49]. The role did come with issues and risks, however, as a City Engineers report noted in 1919:

> *Complaint has been made lately of a nuisance on the Station itself, thus: - When the closing hour for the adjacent pubs arrived gentlemen who have been undergoing bar treatment come out into the street. The treatment is said to effect [sic] their minds and paralyses their bodies to some extent. They fill up the underground place and are complained of as bringing in alcoholic pandemonium of vulgarity, obscenity, and blasphemy to the loathing and disgust of the officer in charge, and all untreated persons within hearing. The paralysis of the gastric nerves, due to the bar treatment, causes some to empty their stomachs about the place, but the mess is immediately cleaned up and no complaint comes from the surface*[50].

Incidents were also reported of attendants suffering assaults. In 1923, for example, the Council Minutes included a note that attendants had recently been assaulted in a "cowardly manner"[51]. The Council requested that the police make more regular and frequent visits to the undergrounds while on duty, particularly in the evening. The Custom House Square had problems with drunken crowds on Saturday nights and the police were often requested by Council to patrol these areas late at night. In 1939 recent special events had seen increased demand, especially by visitors to the city, and the Council decided that the Custom House Square conveniences be open all night. The convenience was without an attendant from 11pm and the Superintendent of Police intimated that his officers would visit the site regularly over those hours[52].

WOMEN'S CONVENIENCES

In the history of Dunedin's public conveniences, a lack of women's toilets was also an issue. "Country Mother" wrote in 1924:

> *"...why is there no restroom such as they have in other towns? As a visitor to your fair city on a public holiday, the only conveniences that I know about are at the railway station and the Octagon, and unlike the ever-fortunate male sex, the inevitable penny must be forthcoming for each and all. It is high time women were elected on the City Council, where their influence would enable free conveniences for women and children to be established in the town."*[53]

Dunedin did have women's conveniences, but they were few and far between. In 1908, the first Dunedin public toilets built for women were beside the tearooms at St Clair and were built a year before the underground conveniences in the city[54]. St Clair Beach was a popular family destination, especially once tram travel had become more common and was a "respectable" activity to enjoy with the family. Dunedin City Council took over the running of the conveniences in 1910. However, these were not a centralised city convenience, enabling women to spend extended time in the central business and retail districts of the city.

Department stores also provided conveniences for their customers - the more time customers spent at their stores, the more they spent. Large Dunedin companies including Brown and Ewing's, Drapery Supply Association, and Kirkpatrick and Glendining & Co provided facilities for their female clientele. Although local Dunedin department stores such as these provided restrooms for women from the 1870s, use of the facilities was still limited to those women who could afford to shop in these stores. The poorer underclass, who did not frequent larger stores, simply had no options. This limited women's ability to move freely in public spaces.

The public continued to voice their concern over what amounted to exclusion of women from these public spaces. Some were concerned that women visiting the city would not know which stores included restrooms[55]. Others observed that "[m]any other deficiencies mark Dunedin, and particularly so in regard to public conveniences for both sexes. This city is utterly lacking in even the most common conveniences in this respect" wrote "Ratepayer" in 1906[56].

Dunedin's women were not alone in suffering this indignity – the city was part of an international pattern which did not provide facilities for women. Various women's organisations in the Western world lobbied for access to public spaces, recognising the connection between access to public facilities for women and their place in wider society[57]. In England it was a main platform of the suffragette movement[58]. Although London had built the first underground conveniences in the world in 1855, it was another 40 years before women got their first conveniences, in the form of a dual-sex facility. In August 1893, the first convenience opened for women at Holborn. Sarah McCabe in her work on gender differentials in the provision of underground conveniences in London, noted that soon after Holborn's opening that it was extensively used by both males and females[59]. The Commissioners of Sewers in the City of London went on to build five more underground conveniences the next year – all exclusively for male use.

As well as prevailing social attitudes preventing general acceptance of women in the public sphere, a more pressing issue for local authorities was the cost needed to build women's facilities. Providing water closets for women was more expensive than men's facilities. In an analysis into the London dual facility in 1895, McCabe noted it cost 175% more to build than a men's-only convenience[60]. Undergrounds cost more to construct in any case, not only due to being subterranean but also due to the space that water closets and lavatories required. In contrast above ground urinals were inexpensive and could be erected for £20 each. The only benefit, from a local authority's perspective, was the ability to charge for the use of women's conveniences, generating income.

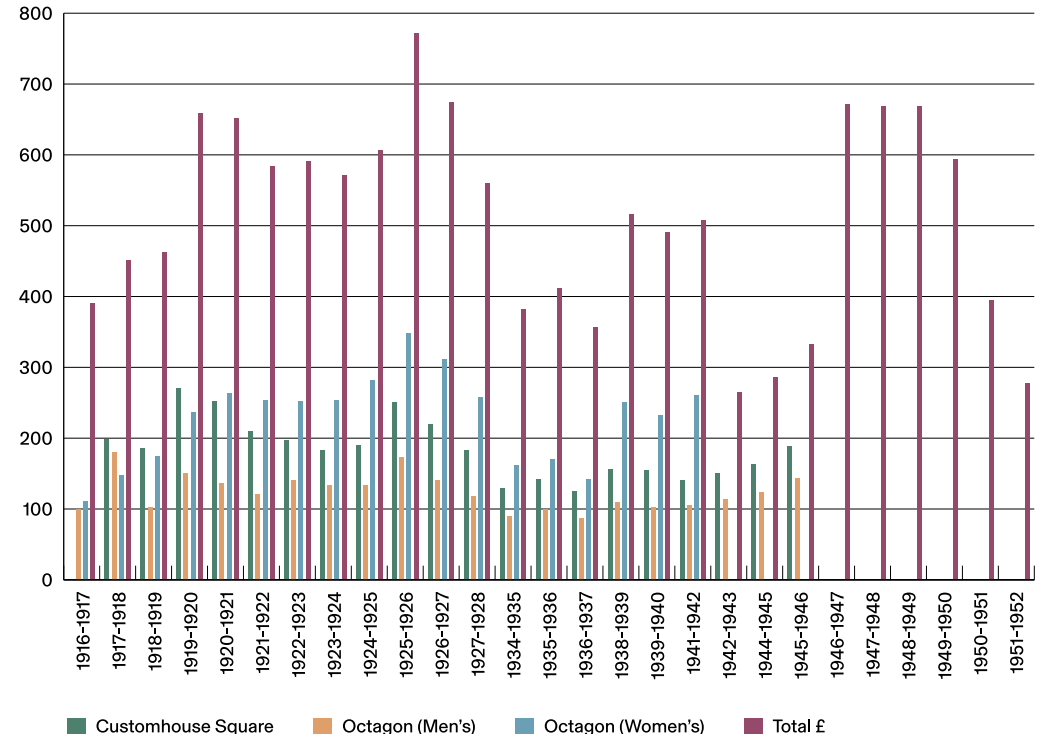
By 1927 the provision of conveniences for women in Dunedin was still woefully inadequate: "We find that the needs of our womenfolk are almost entirely ignored. The position is unjust, harmful, and a disgrace to the city. No time should be lost in having the matter remedied. Because the sex affected is not given to letter writing and is in main restrained by inherited feelings of false modesty - is no excuse whatever for the authorities not providing better or more numerous conveniences for women", writes a "Mere Man" in 1927[61]. The demand for more conveniences continued into the 1930s, albeit with a new challenge to authorities – women's conveniences should be *free*. "Surely our town could supply conveniences as freely for women and children as it does for men" wrote "A.F". "Why should even the rest rooms not be free, and why should it be necessary to ascend steep stairs to them - which elderly women and mothers with babies and small children find difficulty in climbing?[62]"

Despite these ongoing demands, some improvements had been made. From the 1920s the Dunedin City Council delegated the running of new public women's rest rooms to the Ladies Advisory Committee. Restrooms became modern spaces that were more inclusive – they were easily accessible, preferably on a ground floor and provided wider services than just a basic water closet. This echoed the new wave of architecture that came to dominate in New Zealand. Drawing from the Arts and Crafts and bungalow styles of architecture, buildings took on a homelier appearance. This more relaxed, comfortable style was reflected in the new restrooms for women and ideas around public toilets for women, which were understandably more popular than the underground facilities provided by the Council[63]. The idea of 'rest' was linked to ideals of maternity, providing spaces for feeding and changing babies as well as creating a private space where women and children could rest within the public sphere[64]. As the table below shows, the use of the underground convenience in the Octagon began to fall after the mid-1920s.

CONCLUSION

Conveniences Income 1916–1950

SOURCE. *Dunedin City Council Annual Reports*



The period between 1910, when the first underground conveniences were opened, and 1929 saw enormous transformations in the story of Dunedin's public toilets especially in their design, construction and visibility. A large investment was made by Dunedin City Council in establishing the underground conveniences and a long-awaited facility was also provided for women. Restrooms began to gain momentum in the city as the public demanded better facilities. While Council generally considered the supply of the public conveniences a success as demonstrated by usage statistics, there was a large cost in maintaining these facilities. As the public continued to demand more facilities, challenges such as increasing vandalism combined with high maintenance costs and the rise of the women's rest rooms, led to a demise of popularity of the underground conveniences over the next decades. By the mid-1960s, two out of the three conveniences had been demolished and replaced with cheaper, easier to clean stainless steel modern toilets. In 1989 the last Edwardian underground convenience was demolished in the Octagon; convenient no longer.

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2. The term 'conveniences' or 'comfort stations' were used for a public toilet up until the 1960s when the term 'toilet' became in general use in New Zealand.

3. "Public Nuisances," Otago Daily Times, March 14, 1900.

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20. This money was the excess after using the accrued sinking fund remaining when the matured debentures had been paid off.

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26. Denley, 41.

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Making Things Right: New Zealand industrial design pioneer Peter Haythornthwaite, the quest for beauty and putting the user first.

A PROFILE COMMENTARY BY MICHAEL BARRETT

In 2018, interviewing Peter Haythornthwaite for a small contribution to the book, 'Design Generation'[1] (by Michael Smythe; published in support of an Objectspace exhibition of the industrial designer's work), the designer ventured on to the subject of beauty and its importance to his design process. It seems fitting to start here with that idea, because while beauty's role in design is little discussed today, Haythornthwaite saw how objects of beauty make everyday use a delight.

The idea of beauty and what constitutes good design are entwined. Today, in contemporary design parlance, ‘beauty’, or more accurately, ‘beautiful’, is the adjective most reached for to describe effortless ease of use. Across previous decades, it has been suggested that beauty has become a dirty word in design[1]; others have suggested that beauty’s decline is linked to the evolution of rational process and problem solving, or “design thinking”[2]. While there are many definitions about what design thinking is, most riff on this line from the IDEO playbook: a “human-centered approach to innovation that draws from the designer’s toolkit to integrate the needs of people, the possibilities of technology, and the requirements for business success”[3]. A scant evocation of beauty if ever there was one.

Perhaps it is because beauty, subjective and qualitative in the eye of the beholder[4], is not a prudent commercial promise to make to clients. However, for Peter Haythornthwaite, one of this country’s original design thinkers, beauty through honesty of expression and resolution, was something to strive for and a career-long commitment.

We see his intention expressed in the supporting texts of an earlier Objectspace exhibition, ‘Quotidian’ (2010), in which he described the classic design of the Olivetti Lettera 22 typewriter as: “complex and well developed…not indulgent, but exceptional”. The quality that made it so, he explains, “was not a product of styling imagination but rather of form determined by purposefulness – and that’s where its beauty originates.”

That relationship between purpose and beauty provides some insight into the ways Haythornthwaite balances aesthetics, mechanical principles, accessibility, precise resolution and material invention and economy alongside considerations of sustainability, history and craft.

One significant work, LOMAK (Light Operated Mouse And Keyboard, Figure 2), held in the permanent collection of New York’s Museum of Modern Art, was an assistive keyboard for disabled computer users. It “focused on causing the users to feel advantaged, rather than disadvantaged”, he says. The device plugs into a computer’s USB port, is clipped to an adjustable stand placed vertically underneath the computer screen, and is operated by a small laser pointer mounted on a hat or headband.

Interviewed by the New Zealand Herald in 2018, he said: “We were really helping people in need. We helped develop a product that made people feel normal, not disadvantaged and not that nasty word ‘handicapped’. They felt normal.”[5] Despite that, LOMAK was challenging to make a commercial success, with no long-term investors able to be found.

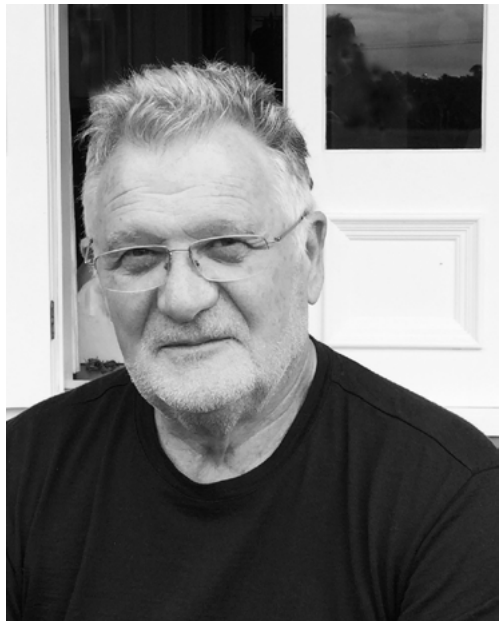

FIGURE 1. Peter Haythornthwaite.

Haythornthwaite’s product output has been nothing if not diverse. There have been hundreds of projects, including the Crown Lynn Country Kitchen range, environmental way finding signs for Auckland Zoo, and the Gone fishin’ fly cabinet – a self-initiated “frolic” (and the joint winner of the Craft Design prize at the 1992 Best Design Awards). He has designed hair brushes for Wella, the freestanding Studio wood-burning stove, still selling well, a modular barbeque range for Beefeater, large outdoor sun umbrellas, the Raven Mop-a-Matic, and the packaging for the Valvemaster additives that helped New Zealand’s fleet transition from leaded to unleaded petrol.

Compare the technological sophistication of LOMAK with that of the “Spife” – the plastic knife-slash-spoon that might still be found around in your kitchen drawer. (Figure 3) It was developed for Zespri to make kiwifruit taste testable. It became the ideal school lunchbox tool for eating kiwifruit, yoghurt and more. While Haythornthwaite at one stage expressed concern about their disposability, it turns out that they have been remarkably long-lived and well-loved, which demonstrates what is possible when design integrity and commitment to end-users are drivers.

FIGURE 2. LOMAK (Light Operated Mouse and Keyboard). Designed by Peter Haythornthwaite and held in the New York Museum of Modern Art's permanent collection.

"As a consultant, you may think you only have one client but you don't, you have many," Haythornthwaite said in our 2018 interview. "There's a paying client but there are many people you need to listen to and converse with, observe and understand. Your client, ultimately, is the person using the product. When we designed the Spife for Zespri, we cut boxes and boxes of kiwifruit, scooped and ate and scooped and ate them so that we could understand how you could best do that and yet manufacture something for three cents. I talked to mums, I talked to my sons, ladies with little kids, four-year olds, school kids. You've got to be open minded; you've got to be willing to listen rather than go with a pre-conceived conclusion. This is a process to discover the trigger that will guide design."

STARTING OUT

Without steering (too much) into predestination, a life in design for Haythornthwaite seemed preordained.

Design ran in the family. Bill, his father, studied at Elam School of Fine Art & Design. By 1948 he had the confidence to establish an advertising and later public relations agency. In time, his mother, Ann, "a woman with refined good taste", would open a drapery store. Between both, one imagines he had exposure to both the creative process and the need to develop and maintain client relationships. Haythornthwaite senior was an autodidact prone to personal design projects[6], acquiring the skills necessary for projects as required (including, for example, "how to make a pattern and then sew a new fabric heading for an old Morris 8").[7] This likely had an effect on the naturally curious Peter.

In 'Design Generation', Michael Smythe notes that Bill Haythornthwaite's work was notable at the time for being published in international design periodicals and publications, and it was such publications which would keep the young Haythornthwaite happily ensconced. He was "inspired by the uniqueness of the work as a boy, with appreciation of the work initially an 'I like' response"[8].

It was not just periodicals that piqued and extended his curiosity. In 1958, Haythornthwaite senior was working to design airplane interiors for Tasman Empire Airways Limited (TEAL), the forerunner of Air New Zealand. A delegation of men from American industrial design company Henry Dreyfuss Associates, working for Lockheed Martin, visited the family home to discuss requirements.[9] Fourteen-year-old Peter was encouraged by his father to show the group his drawings of cars. He received an affirmative response,

which helped shape his determination to work in the profession and, perhaps, one day, even to work at the pioneering design office.

Of course, for a budding designer of the time, great modernists were a source of inspiration. At Elam, in Auckland (1962-65), he would try to unpick the thought processes and solutions of the great European modernists – notably Max Bill, a Swiss polymath, instigator of the New Bauhaus, architect, furniture designer, graphic artist, poet, painter and sculptor. Haythornthwaite also enjoyed the "strongly symbolic work" of Japanese designers.

"I remember just absorbing Swiss, German and British design," he recalls. "Taking it all in and saying well, why can't I do that?"[10] He would carry that short determination with him through his career, although perhaps later balancing it with an intention to strive to make things better.

From Elam, Haythornthwaite's next great adventures would be in America. In his final year (1965), a design educator from the University of Illinois, Ed Zagorski, visited Elam on a Fulbright Scholarship. Haythornthwaite was inspired.

"His enthusiasm was contagious. He suggested that I apply to do a Masters at his school, the University of Illinois. Unbeknown to him I did apply. So when we serendipitously bumped each other on Waikiki Beach he said, 'what heck are you doing here?' I said, I'm going to your school – didn't you know? He didn't."

After three years in Illinois, Haythornthwaite worked in California. Then Niels Diffrient, an exceptional and already very well respected human factors designer hired him for a position at Henry Dreyfuss Associates (HDA) in New York City. At the time, HDA was one of America's great mid-century industrial design studios, and Henry Dreyfuss was friends with the heads of some very large, innovative companies, including Polaroid's Dr Edwin Land, inventor of the instant photograph, and Bill Hewitt, chairman of John Deere.

Haythornthwaite's employment at Dreyfuss – hired as a senior industrial designer – happily coincided with the wagging tail of America's post World War Two economic good fortune.

"New York felt like the centre of the universe". He said. "It was a nucleus of culture, learning, the arts, American history and more; and Carol [his wife] and I imbibed this."

"There was a seriousness for me about work because this was a serious business for the companies you were helping. But there also had to be a strong element of fun. I would never have been involved in design if I couldn't have played. At Dreyfuss there was a lot of laughter in the office. And each lunch time we would go out to visit design exhibits, by Ray and Charles Eames for instance, or wander through the Henri Bendel emporium, have a hotdog from a cart on 5th and 59th, or to just mix with the diverse throng of people."[11]

It was a time when you might feel the future was still being reinvented. Material innovations were inspiring new consumer products and, in 1955, Henry Dreyfuss had published 'Designing for People' – "an invaluable designers resource" – which used humanscale models of 'Joe' and 'Josephine' as avatars to map and measure human movement; or, in the words of Greek philosopher Protagoras: "Man is the measure of all things".[12]

'Designing for People' was full of pithy advice for a young designer. "Design is a silent salesman…contributing not just increased efficiency…but also assurance and confidence." Dreyfuss also argued the importance of building trust with engineers and business managers, and saw industrial design as "a great equaliser". His description of people-centric design is illuminating in the context of Haythornthwaite's career. Dreyfuss, once quizzed by a journalist on how he would start to solve an industrial design problem, said: "We begin with men and women and we end with them. We consider the potential user – habits, physical dimensions, and psychological impulses. We also measure their purse, which is what I meant by ending with them, for we must conceive not only a satisfactory design, but also one that incorporates that indefinable appeal to assure purchase.'"[13] Henry went on to research and write the fundamental designers' handbook, 'The Measure of Man'.

Niels Diffrient and two other staff members, would later expand on Dreyfuss's human factors research and information in 'Humanscale 123', which Haythornthwaite describes as "handsomely designed, comprising interactive quarto sized panels that provided new human measurement information". It would become the go-to publication for designers, architects and ergonomists.

At Dreyfuss, Haythornthwaite was putting "humanscale" design into practice, creating objects, interactions, and environments for leading companies. The work was varied. One project was the design of a grader cab for John Deere. "Because it wasn't electronic, the grader needed to accommodate two drivers, one to operate the blade while the other drove. The design resolution was based on the company's deep knowledge of human factors. It was not about styling, but purposefulness. Henry Dreyfuss actually changed the future of John Deere. Instead of accepting his role to design tractors and so forth he questioned the way things were being done. He asked, 'How can we make machinery easier to use, more comfortable, safer for the operators?'"

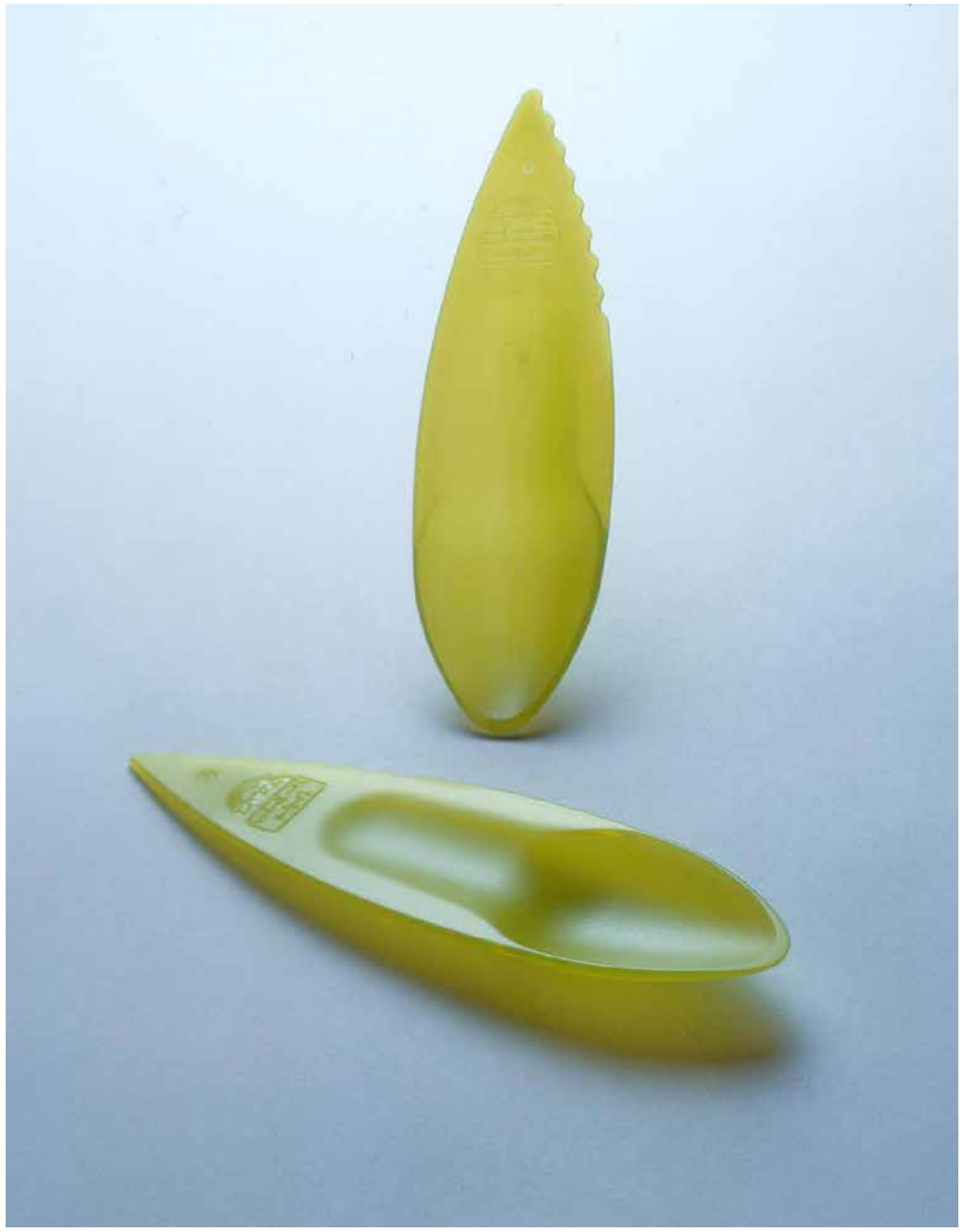

FIGURE 3. The ‘Spife’, the knife/spoon developed by Haythornthwaite for Zespri.

FIGURE 4. ‘Artifakts’ desktop stationery, the Flipfile.

FIGURE 5. The tape dispenser in the ‘Artifakts’ range.

There was also work for Bell Telephone Company – whose phones were all designed in the Dreyfuss office. Aesthetically unpretentious but ergonomically well considered – "beautiful by function" – they expanded the choice of black or beige, into a new world of colour - Bell's many customers required an appropriate vehicle to help them to make a choice. The solution was a retail store, which Haythornthwaite describes as 'proto-Apple', in some ways.

> "To present the different phones we employed a standard display system from Denmark called Abstracta which enabled people to hold, consider and select the phone of their choice. It was a revolution, phones previously were rented, now for the first-time people had a choice of what they might like to have. And they could take the phone home and plug it into a pre-wired home."

A PERSONAL MISSION

Haythornthwaite would eventually return home from his rich and varied life in a global design nexus. The obvious question is why? Initially, he had no such intention at all, deferring invitations from his former teacher at Elam, Jolyon Saunders, to take a design lecturer position at the school in Auckland.

> "I wrote back and said no. Then my parents came by and said, 'Are you sure about this? They're going to pay your way home and they'll pay your way back if you don't like it.' In the end, I thought well, maybe I will. I thought we'd stay for a year or so and then go back to America."

As things turned out, Haythornthwaite loved teaching. He describes it as a time when some highly capable and eager students went to Elam. It also helped that in the 1970s lecturers were encouraged to practise as well as teach, which meant Haythornthwaite could extend his new-found pedagogical tendencies to New Zealand's commercial sector. In New York he had been at the zenith of design, had "seen so much and experienced so much", that he returned a zealot for human-centred design, excited and optimistic about New Zealand's nascent potential.

> "I just came back and I was so excited. I thought, we've just got to stop thinking about just making money but about what can we take to the world? There's so much opportunity here. I always set out to educate clients. I had a responsibility to educate them – not because I was necessarily smart but because I had knowledge to share. I believe a lot of clients have come to understand design through my perspective because I was an evangelist when I came back to New Zealand."

At first, he juggled teaching with private practice, exploiting university holidays – around four months of the year – and working nights and weekends. He undertook consultancy work for organisations like Temperzone and the New Zealand Post Office, and set about applying his contemporary design approach to companies that previously had seemed to not think much about how, or even what, they presented to the public. To do this, he identified companies and people he wanted to work with and went after them. Once he'd got them on board, he would assess their health, philosophy, values, vision and purpose and see whether it "all knitted together in a consistent manner".

"Good design positively influences every aspect of a company," he says. "And bad design does the opposite. Good design is a way of thinking and doing that can transform the way a company behaves, competes, and wins. But this requires it to be integrated into culture, that is, company purpose, values, and vision. It must be championed. Otherwise design is relegated to being an enhancement of commercial convenience."

A mid-1970s example of this theory in action is the human-factors review he conducted of New Zealand Post's working environment – a response to the increasing number of women joining the workforce as tellers. The result was a more ergonomic setting, "lower counter heights and the removal of equipment that led to broken fingernails and snagged stockings".[14]

However, the world of commerce is also a world of compromise. Haythornthwaite says, "Even with the best of the work that I have undertaken, there is always a degree of dissatisfaction. There is always a better solution or way."

That sense that solutions could be better drove him to start companies that would enable him to design and manufacture products to a standard that clients may not see as valid and valued. Such was the case with Artifakts (desktop stationery products), Studio Stoves (wood-burning stoves),

FIGURE 6. The ‘OohAh’ woodburning stove. Peter Haythornthwaite has designed two other stoves, the Stack Vista and the Studio.

Ipso Facto (self-start projects), and Gesundheit (marketing design events). “There was a ‘joy’ of being in control of a solution’s destiny – it’s an amazing learning experience.”

MAKING THINGS RIGHT

In the chronology of design, Haythornthwaite is a late Modernist and there are many references from the period that help explain his approach. Ralph Caplan, editor of the American industrial design magazine ‘I.D.’ in the 1960s described good design as “making things right”, an apt description for Haythornthwaite’s approach. The early modernists, “not only created desirable things – they also used them to promote the idea of societal advancement,” wrote the industrial designer Tucker Viemeister for ‘Design Observer’. Not a passive designer, Haythornthwaite made opportunities, looked for areas where he could improve companies or introduce products into the market, delighted in problems, and saw how design could lead progress. That good design could lead to good business and good business could help achieve wider societal benefits is something he understood well.

In his consideration of beauty he is like the celebrated American modernist designer Paul Rand, for whom beauty and utility, were, ideally, “mutually generative”, or German designer Dieter Rams, whose third tenet from ten (developed to answer his own question about what is good design) was “good design is aesthetic”.

Some years ago, writing to Rick Wells, the former managing director of Formway Furniture, Haythornthwaite expanded his thoughts on the subject. “Beauty and deftness of resolution is experienced and appreciated when the solution performs its task with eloquence and ease; without conflict or uncertainty for the end user or customer.” Beauty is commensurate with balance, “when colour, materials and content integrate with fluency” and, he adds, it “should not be mistaken for styling, and should not clash with purpose”.

> “It’s the cup that nestles into your hand for a cold-morning cup of coffee. It’s the brand identity that engages and inspires by its refinement and appropriateness. It’s the car ‘control area’ that is driver-intuitive, safe, prioritised and functional – as well as handsome.”

His understanding of beauty was that it had a role to play too, not as ancillary or an unintended consequence, but as a purposeful pillar which, for commercial clients,

had a powerful quality. “Take the time to quest for beauty,” he wrote. “Beauty demands discernment, judgement, perceptiveness, and meditation, but the reward is that it will enhance your fulfillment in life.”

Of course, to understand how it will bring fulfillment, requires an empathetic point of view, understanding of the need to be met. Haythornthwaite felt a responsibility to ‘walk in the shoes’ of the user.

> “I wanted to gain an understanding as to what it was like to be the user. For example, what’s it like to be a first-time visitor depending on hospital signage. Often the signage is designed to meet the needs of people who are already familiar with the hospital environment, but their logic is different to a first-time visitor, maybe under stress, seeking to expediently see a loved one.

For Haythornthwaite, the commitment to meeting the needs of people in ways that are effortlessness, elegant and enduring has been career defining, establishing him, as design historian Michael Smythe has written[15], as the best New Zealand designer of his generation.

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Seeing Red and Feeling Blue: Social Commentary and Protest in the Work of Michael Reed

DOROTHEE PAULI

Accounts of politically inspired art occupy the margins of New Zealand art history. The career of Michael Reed (born 1950, Christchurch) offers an opportunity to discuss how a New Zealand artist has responded to shifts in 20th and early 21st century global debates regarding social justice, economic exploitation, cultural domination and war. He works across a range of mainly print-based techniques but has also found international recognition for his technically innovative 'medals of dishonor.' Through his frequent involvement in collaborative projects, Reed has become part of national and international networks of artists who attempt to speak for the many victims of geo-political power struggles.

KEY WORDS # Political art # Socially engaged art # Printmaking # Medals of Dishonour # Collaborative art practice # Post-colonial perspectives

"In a decaying society, art, if it is truthful, must also reflect decay. And unless it wants to break faith with its social function, art must show the world as changeable. And help to change it." Ernst Fischer (1899-1972)

By his own admission, Michael Reed is an artist who is hard to pin down. He displays a magpie's appetite for trying new techniques and new directions in his creative practice, underpinned by a life-long commitment to the ever-versatile medium of print. In a career spanning nearly five decades, he has never been stuck for ideas or the right ways to express them. He has been exhibiting steadily since the 1970s, often alongside his better-known contemporaries such as Barry Cleavin, Ralph Hotere, Gordon Walters and Don Peebles.[1] He is the recipient of numerous national and international awards, and his work, which has been shown in South America, the United States, Europe, Australia, Cuba and Japan, is held in collections all over the world, including the British Museum.[2] Why then does his name not appear more frequently in New Zealand's mainstream arts publications?[3]

The answer to that question may lay in the fact that the work he is best known for is often politically motivated, international in its focus and print-based. Given the current debates on the political, economic, and environmental future of this planet, it is perhaps timely to broaden current perspectives on this aspect of contemporary New Zealand art practice. Therefore, this article will discuss how Reed, born in 1950, right on the mid-point of the 20th century, responded to certain aspects of growing up and maturing as an artist in New Zealand at that time, and how he moved on from there to acknowledge the cultural and ideological shifts associated with the rise of neo-liberal politics and post-colonial thinking. To this day, he brings to his work the necessary personal attributes required of an artist intent on delivering uncomfortable messages. He has been described as "tenacious, methodical and uncompromising"[4] and he freely admits that the production of "visual sedatives for the established middle-class art print market"[5] is not for him. At 71, he is still not ready to bend to the prevailing trends of New Zealand's art market and continues to lend his voice to those not often heard in the ongoing global debates on social justice.

In the first instance, Reed's instinctive and often very overt responses to recent historical shifts need to be considered in the context of his upbringing in post-war New Zealand. His interest in art and design did not develop against a comfortable middle-class background, and the social context of Christchurch in the 1950s and 60s provided little encouragement or inspiration in that regard. His recollections paint a rather restrained picture of his younger years, largely devoid of the opportunities a more privileged set of circumstances may have been able to provide for a child with artistic sensibilities. His working-class parents expected him to leave school at fifteen. His father especially thought of his adult son as over-educated, obviously sensitive to the class divide that was opening up between them. That said, his parents' left-leaning political views explains the trajectory of much of Reed's later work.

Reed's art training began at Hillmorton High School, located in the south-east of Christchurch, and one of the many public high schools established in 1960s New Zealand to meet the educational needs of the baby-boomer generation.[6] To this day, Hillmorton High School carries no particular prestige in a city where the colour of one's school tie forms the basis of significant social and economic networks. It was there that Reed had a lucky break insofar as his art teacher was Ray Neumann. In Reed's own words Neumann was 'a god-send'[7] enthusiastic, supportive, tolerant, and a decisive influence. He introduced Reed to a wide range of pre-dominantly European artists, including the so-called Kitchen Sink School of British post-war social realism, and especially John Bratby. Neumann also encouraged Reed to study the work of Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele, Oskar Kokoschka, the German Expressionists and David Hockney, and showed him examples of Scandinavian modernism to feed his student's early interest in architecture. He was also Reed's first printmaking teacher, introducing him to the linocut, woodcut and screen-printing on textile. Although somewhat sceptical of academia himself, Neumann encouraged Reed's educational aspirations, and perhaps most importantly, he persuaded Reed's parents to let their son stay on at high school past the age of fifteen. This was helped by the fact that Reed, who was otherwise a less than enthusiastic pupil, completed the Fine Arts Preliminary (then the equivalent of bursary art covering sculpture, design, painting, drawing and some photography) during sixth form, and, having received a studentship at the end of that year, transferred to the Ilam School of Art at the age of seventeen.[8]

Reed did not arrive at Canterbury University with any fixed notion as to what he wanted to specialise in and completed the required general first-year course in 1967.[9] It was then he met some his better-known peers, including the sculptor Graham Bennett, who was studying photography and design, and Chris Booth, who left Ilam after the first

year of study to work for Barbara Hepworth in the UK. His fellow students also included the painters Philip Clairmont, Gerda Leenards, Sally Burton and the photographer Mark Adams. He also came to know some of the older students, including Ross Gray, Gavin and Vivian Bishop, Shona Cowan, Brett de Thier, Peter Ridder and Robyn and Peter Belton. At the time, painting, which had always been a strong department at the Ilam School of Fine Art was by far the most popular option,[10] which was one of the reasons Reed decided not to join that class.[11]

In 1968, Reed briefly considered studying textiles, but as that department was shutting down, he chose to follow his interest in printmaking instead. He had previously seen and was impressed by the work of Barry Cleavin, and therefore enrolled in John 'Jack' Knight's printmaking course. Reed remembers Knight (1913-1981) as a competent academic and painter, and as an amiable, but hands-off tutor. It was Derek Mitchell, the only other full-time printmaking student at the time, and ahead of Reed by some years, who was the most supportive and taught him technique, namely intaglio and lithography. At the time, screen-printing was still considered a highly commercial medium, and Reed studied this particular process independently. His minor studies covered graphics, with an emphasis on typography, painting (with Ted Francis) and photography. Being one of two full-time printmaking students greatly appealed to Reed. He respected Mitchell and preferred working on his own, more or less free from the usual art school distractions. That said, Reed did not isolate himself entirely from like-minded people of his generation.

In his first year at university, and in keeping with his left-leaning political views and pacifist ideals, he joined local anti-Vietnam war protests, which precipitated his involvement with the general anti-war movement. To avoid conscription, then still the law in New Zealand, he registered as a conscientious objector. He also began to understand the destructive consequences of racism, and the challenges faced by the United States Civil Rights movement.[12] However, his developing political awareness did not immediately translate into the politically motivated work of the kind he is now associated with. Instead, his graduation portfolio points to another consistent aspect of his work, an eye for effective composition and a seductive use of colour. An example of this is the award-winning *Joybox* (1969, intaglio and colour pencil, collection of the artist).[13] Here a square box set against a biomorphic, embossed background, is accentuated by an eye-catching band of rainbow colours, an approach that resurfaced several other prints of this era. It reflects the

FIGURE 1. *The Collector*, 1976, etching, 378x557mm, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu.

artist's interest in British Pop Art, which also appeared in some of the compositional elements of *The Collector* (Figure 1). This early intaglio work combines figurative elements with an ambiguous organisation of pictorial space, and the use of block colour as a balancing element. By the 1970s then, Reed had developed a standard of technical competence in printmaking that allowed him to mix various printmaking techniques in at times complex compositions based on expressive mark making.

Reed's concern for social justice first appeared in his work when he began to support Trade Aid in the late 1970s, and more notably so during the Springbok Tour of 1981. At the time he not only joined the protest movement but also designed and printed a poster for a Christchurch protest march. The wordless placard shows a solemn African woman and three undernourished children, their eyes highlighted

by white paint, added in by some of Reed's students at Christchurch Polytechnic (Figure 2).[14] In its composition, illustrative style and evocative use of the human figure, this work recalls Käthe Kollwitz's moving commentaries on the effects of poverty and social injustice on women and children. As Elizabeth Rankin has pointed out, "this style of expressive naturalism carried an accessible message about black suffering that did not need any text to convey compelling reasons for opposing apartheid. Moreover, so many repeated images produced considerable visual impact at the subsequent march...."[15]Although initially designed as a simple piece of ephemera, the modest poster is now a compelling reminder of an important chapter in New Zealand's social history.

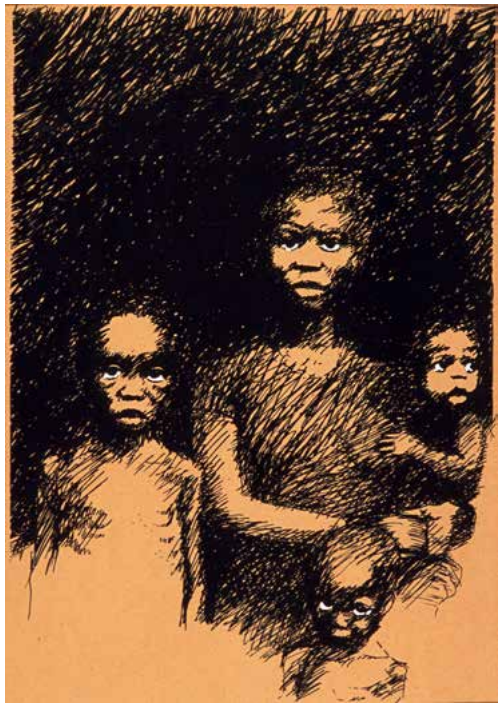


FIGURE 2. *Springbok Tour*, 1981, screen print and white paint, 950x690mm, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu.

At the time, Reed also sympathised with the New Zealand Values Party and sporadically so with Greenpeace, but he has given his most consistent support to World Vision projects in rural Malawi. Throughout his engagement with public agents of social change, however, he elected to stay in the background. Any involvement with mass movements or crowds of any kind is not for him. A naturally reticent person, he still tries to affect change at a personal level, and to this day his art remains his most potent means to express his political and environmental messages. By his own admission, it was teaching at the School of Art and Design at the Christchurch Polytechnic (later CPIT and now the Ara Institute of Canterbury) which gave him the freedom and the opportunity to do and say with his art what he wanted. At times teaching also pushed his work into new directions.

A good example of this is his engagement with Pacific Studies. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Reed wanted to provide some relevant local design context for his Māori and Pacific Island students. Encouraged by his first hand-study of Polynesian artefacts in museum collections, but also by international examples of cross-cultural art practice, as seen in Eduardo Paolozzi's exhibition *Lost Magic Kingdom,*[16] he had grown to admire the various design traditions of the Pacific region, especially in the form of tapa cloth.[17] It was at this time that he also became fully aware of the lasting effects of colonial rule on indigenous peoples, and how Māori especially had been stripped of their cultural identity. This is just one of many similar episodes in Reed's teaching career where his concern for his students' success led him to invest many hours of extracurricular research to expand his own understanding of social history, visual cultures, and design techniques he had previously not been familiar with. From the beginning then, the setting of Reed's political and moral compass, his natural curiosity, his work ethic and commitment to independent learning not only shaped the constantly evolving nature of his art and design practice, but also the educational outcomes of his students. His teaching philosophy at both diploma and degree level emphasized collaboration, and the recognition that teaching can be an aspect of socially engaged art practice. A teaching studio creates opportunities for specific forms of creative collaboration designed to benefit particular communities, and in Reed's case this included many generations of students from a variety of social and ethnic backgrounds.

In the late 1980s, fellow printmaker Barry Cleavin noticed that an assertive and particular voice was beginning to emerge in Reed's work and he later likened Reed's prints and drawings to Venus flytraps - alluring to look at, but

FIGURE 3. *Just Testing? Sit and Watch on the Atoll Range*,1993, screen print, 720x505mm, collection of the artist.

often dangerous on closer inspection.[18] At that time, Reed became more overt in his political works, "against a trend in art featuring diffuse slogans that could mean anything to anybody."[19] As a direct result of his growing dismay about European and American nuclear testing in the Pacific, he developed a visual vocabulary that left little room for speculation, and once again he followed the example set by Goya and Kollwitz. He cites both these artists as enduring influences, but also the Mexican muralists, especially David Alfaro Siqueiros and José Celmente Orozco. During a trip to Mexico in 1987 he had seen their work firsthand and he also discovered the visceral symbolism of Mexican folk art the muralists themselves had drawn on. Proof of the deep impression the blunt iconography of Mexican art left on him

is *Just Testing? Sit and Watch on the Atoll Range* (Figure 3), which responds to the exploitation and destruction of Pacific Island territories at the hand of the world's superpowers. Sitting and watching in this instance are a group of skeletons, recalling in their self-satisfied pose photographs of American navy personnel relaxing aboard their warships next to their contaminated nuclear Pacific test sites. The skeletons, suggestive of the deadly consequences of witnessing such tests at close range, appear to be fused to chairs based on Gerrit Rietveld's famously uncomfortable *Zig-Zag* design classic.

FIGURE 4. *Anxious Islands*, 1990, screen print, photocopy, intaglio and shellac, 586x152 mm, private collection.

A more subtle comment on the same topic is the *Anxious Islands* suite (Figure 4), a trio of mixed media assemblages. They combine intaglio work with screen printed backdrops referring to the iconography of traditional Pacific Island art, and a formerly classified French army map which documented the damage done to Moruroa Atoll during French nuclear tests in the Pacific. This is the first of his printed suites to feature typographic elements, quoting from the French map where it highlights 'les fissures laterales' – the cracks that appeared in the island's landmass because of the tests. Reed portrays the fragility and makeshift nature of subsistence economies in some parts of the Pacific through a combination of rickety ladders leaning against insubstantial towers, which themselves perch on small, diminishing fragments of land. Here the nature of the etched lines is as delicate as the ecosystems they reference, and the watchtowers remind local populations to remain vigilant in the face of further outside interference in the South Pacific. As borne out by *Anxious Islands* and *Just Testing*, by the late 80s and early 90s, Reed had become less tethered to Western notions of what constitutes the centre and the margins of global culture. In that sense, his work also articulates aspects of a late 20th century post-colonial enquiry into the complex legacy of two-hundred years of foreign intervention in the Pacific region. Neither *Just Testing*, nor the *Anxious Islands* suite enjoyed any form of popular success, and this came as no surprise to the artist. The political left, he realised, does not buy art – the rich do, and few of them want to be critiqued for their tastes or their social affiliations. Despite, or perhaps because of this, Reed continued to pursue a direction in his art that set out "to snag the viewer's eyeball and their mind."[20]

Apart from the uncompromising mind-set Reed shares with many of his national and international collaborators such as Sandra Thomson, Diane Victor or Dan Heyman,[21] *Anxious Islands* in particular points to another thread within Reed's multi-directional work of the last thirty years. He insists on staying well informed on global issues when the easier option would be to seek refuge in matters of style and technique. He was quick to pick up on the late 20th century realisation that the world's ecosystems are fragile and under threat, but also interconnected. He reflects on the fact that even in face of diminishing natural resources, the human capacity for greed appears to be infinite. Infinite, too, is humankind's capacity for violence in the pursuit of political and economic advantage. In all of this, Reed draws comfort from the fact that art can, and always has, expressed all aspects of the human condition. Responding to whichever

artistic tradition he is investigating at the time, he adds his voice to those who use their art to bear witness, to question, to pause and reflect. As the artist himself stated in 2005: "History provides the proof that creativity is often omnivorous. Art is not necessarily respectful of current social and political niceties or a comfortable commodity. No creative individual operates completely within a vacuum and cultural membranes are permeable. The creative practitioner is a combination of inclination and opportunity."[22] Inclination and opportunity are, of course, determined by historical and geographical context, as well technological developments. Reed's work reflects how the digital revolution of the later 20th and early 21st century has drawn New Zealand much closer to globalised patterns of cultural expression – distance no longer looks our way the way it used to.[23] And yet, while digital communication technology and contemporary modes of transport transcend some of the former boundaries of time and space, New Zealand remains largely unaffected by the maelstroms of history that destroy entire countries elsewhere in the world. Reed knows this, he is aware of his own privileged circumstances, however humble his background and lifestyle may appear to others looking in. "In New Zealand" he says, "life is about the quality of your existence, not whether you exist at all."[24]

It is this awareness that encouraged him to shift his focus from the foreign exploitation of the Pacific region onto those who profit the most from keeping the world ensnared in a climate of political unrest. Following a theme first raised in *Feeling Blue and Seeing Red* (1995-97, screen print, 446x1188mm, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu), a self-portrait which includes on the left-hand side of a screen-printed diptych the 54 armed conflicts which were being fought in the world at the time, Reed began to investigate the global arms trade. In other words, he decided to take an unflinching look at the impact the first-world production of and trade in weapons has on predominately third-world countries. This is not easy to do, as the topic is hard to digest and could persuade anybody to give up on humanity altogether. Instead, Reed chose the global arms trade as the subject for his MFA, which he completed at Canterbury University in 1999. Submitted alongside a research essay entitled *The Art of Counter Attack*, this body of work shows Reed at his most defiant. In an installation comprising seven predominantly large-scale works, he pulled no visual punches as he took to task the international merchants of death. They remain sheltered by their wealth, political influence and laws protecting their industry, while elsewhere entire communities are killed, maimed or rendered homeless by their products.

FIGURE 5. *Binding Statements*, 1999, silk screen on dyed cotton crepe bandages, 3000x9200mm, Collection of the Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu.

The best-known piece of this suite of works is *Binding Statements* (Figure 5), where Reed printed several sobering statements regarding the effect and size of the international arms trade onto a collection of blood red bandages. Overall, this was a difficult exhibition to view because it upended any audience expectation of the gallery as a place of polite entertainment. That said, in 2001, Helen Clark, then Prime Minister of New Zealand, chose *Binding Statements* as her favourite work in the Christchurch Art Gallery collection.[25] It also provided the starting point for a later piece on a similar theme. *Maim Radius* (Figure 6), is one of a pair of works of similar content, which highlights the factual, yet ultimately callous language used in the promotional material published by arms manufacturers. Based on an A3 sized assemblage of printed bandages layered with burned acetate, *Maim Radius* alludes not only to the lethal effectiveness of the products available at arms fairs, but also to the human cost of their deployment. The initial assemblage was photographed by Reed's former colleague Murray Hedwig, and then digitally printed at a much larger scale to further link the image to the promotional banners commonly seen at arms fairs.

The fact that Reed can deliver potent messages in any variety of formats is further borne out by his medallions, which have received international attention.[26] Reed first exhibited a medallion at the 1991 New Zealand Contemporary Medallion Group (NZCMG) show, at the invitation of Christchurch art dealer and free-lance curator Grant Banbury. He has contributed to national and international exhibitions of the NZCMG ever since and began to participate in Fédération Internationale de la Médaille d'Art (FIDEM) exhibitions in 1996. Reed was conscious that he would find the traditional shape of medallions challenging, as by his own admission he does not like circular formats.[27] That said, given the thematic trajectory of his work in the 1990s, the medallions very soon morphed into openly subversive 'medals of dishonour,' reminiscent at times of the mid-20th century anti-war medals by American sculptor David Smith (1906-1965).[28] 'Medals of Dishonour' was also the title of a 2009 exhibition at the British Museum. It showcased their

FIGURE 6. *Maim Radius*, 2007, digital inkjet print on paper, of a screen print on cotton crepe bandage and photocopy on acetate, 1465 x 1092 mm., collection of the artist.

FIGURE 7. *WWI Flanders/ Mud Beneath their Boots* (Fig. 8, 2017, cast bronze and turned steel, 128mm diameter, height 34mm. Collection of the artist.

FIGURE 8. *Looking Back, Looking Forward / An Award for Manufacturing*, 1999, assembled found metal tin and metal fitting, silk screen and photocopy on paper, 110mm diameter, and silk screen on cotton crepe bandage, British Museum.

special-interest collection of subversive medals, some of which date back to the 17th century.[29] As of December 2017, the British Museum owns four of Reed's medals, which puts him in illustrious company. For the 2009 exhibition, for example, they commissioned works by renowned international artists such as Jake and Dinos Chapman, Ellen Gallagher, Grayson Perry, and William Kentridge.[30]

The medals provide Reed with an ideal vehicle for his persistent and often confronting protests against all forms of violence and exploitation. From the beginning, he used the double-sided nature of the medallion to show the two sides of each issue he chooses to comment on. *Moruroa/ Mururoa1* (1991, cast bronze, 88mm diameter, private collection), like *Anxious Islands*, contrasts the dispassionate mapping of the effects of French nuclear testing at the atoll, as seen on the obverse of the medal, with the anguished portrait of an islander rendered homeless by this callous act of environmental destruction. Similarly, *Trickle Down Economics/ Life under The Round Table* (1993, cast bronze, 90x120mm, British Museum) summarises the false promises of neo-liberal economic policy. On the obverse, a pair of business men fill each other's plates with a steady flow of profits, while on the reverse a woman crouched under the round table holds up an empty bowl.

In the 1990s, Reed's medals engaged not only with global instances of social injustice, but also satirised the context conventional medals are usually related to. As observed by John Freeman-Moir, "medals awarded by the state are symbols of convention and conformity"[31] and serve to perpetuate the ideological status quo. Therefore they can be easily subverted to do exactly the opposite, namely to protest against oppressive regimes of all political persuasions and state sponsored violence in the shape of wars of aggression. Reed's 'medals of dishonour' do just that, and often in a highly experimental manner. *Military Wisdom* (1995, cast bronze, 113x100mm, collection of the artist), like *Trickle Down Economics/ Life under The Round Table,* abandons the shape of the traditional medal, and instead takes on the guise of a skull in profile, adorned with a laurel wreath supplemented with missiles, and rows of teeth consisting of machinegun cartridges. *Looking Back, Looking Forward/ An Award for Manufacturing* (Figure 7), sees Reed expanding on the visual and technical repertoire developed during his MFA year, with the medallion's printed 'ribbon' explaining as to who profits and who suffers from the business of war. The past manufacturers of landmines re-join the side of the winners, as they are paid a second time to dismantle the product they originally supplied. While for much of the 1990s

Reed concerned himself with the politics and commercial interests underpinning 20th century warfare, a medal he produced more recently served to commemorate the fallen of World War One and the approaching 100th anniversary of Armistice Day.

WWI Flanders/ Mud Beneath their Boots (Figure 8), is a melancholic tribute to the casualties of the 'Great War.' The obverse features a small line of text, quietly lamenting the countless young men who 'lie in premature graves.' The boot prints pictured on the reverse were inspired by Alan Marriott's *Mud Beneath My Boots*, based on the moving wartime recollections of his uncle Len Coley.[32] Reed decided that whichever side the combatants were on, the mud beneath their boots was a shared experience. Using a photograph supplied by the New Zealand Army Museum as a reference point, Reed created miniature versions of a New Zealand soldier's boot soles, and 'marched' them through the damp clay of his casting mould. This side of the medal is deeply inset within the turned steel cylinder that frames the work, to relate the image further to the muddy depths of Flanders' trenches. The steel outer surface retains its manufacturing and handling patina to allude to the barrel of a weapon that has seen action.

Another one of Reed's more recent medallions is entitled *'Me First- The Trump Award for Outstanding Greed, Unsullied by Ethics* (2017, cast bronze, 100mm diameter, British Museum). Here a seemingly respectful portrait of the former American president seen in profile is undermined by the medal's name inscribed on the reverse.[33] It warns about the dangers inherent in the unpredictable and apparently self-serving presidency of Donald Trump. What all the medals demonstrate is that Reed can adjust his compositional approach, and especially the use of figurative elements to any scale, and that even the most conservative and traditional of genres can accommodate and benefit from creative experimentation. The medallion work is a good example of the artist confronting his instinctive dislike of a particular format, and as a result arriving at a near perfect medium to convey a variety of messages.

To the medallions and the politically inspired prints of the 1990s, he later added the equally uncompromising Runners for the Corridors of Power (2009, digital dye injection on nylon, 4000x1000mm, collection of Dilana)[34] produced in conjunction with Dilana Rugs, and a set of punchy Drapes for Real Men (2009-2011, screen print on textile, 5000x1600mm, collection of the artist). Both sets of works received some scholarly attention alongside other, national and international examples of politically motivated art.[35]

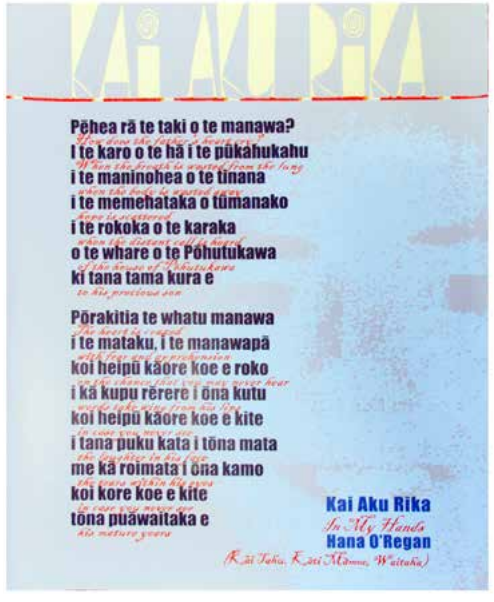
FIGURE 9. *By-product* 2018, digitally printed paper, dry point and metal tins, 3000x900mm, private collection.

This highlights the way Reed built his international network of contacts. Through print collaborations and international print workshops, he linked up with a community of like-minded artists who look towards the centres of printmaking excellence for inspiration and who continue to build on the tradition of printmaking as a medium of protest and social commentary.

That same network facilitated Reed' participation at Impact 10, in Santander, Spain in 2018. The large format of *Drapes for Real Men* anticipated Reed's contribution to this particular show. *By-product* is an installation which consists of a monochromatic and digitally printed length of paper in combination with 5 small format, circular drypoints. It was exhibited at Impact 10 as part of a group project called *Encountering Our Indelible Mark*, initiated by American artist Blake Sanders (Orange Barrel Industries).[36] *By-product* expands a concept first explored in the medallion *Endowment* (2017, engraved aluminium, digital printing on paper and

FIGURE 10. *The Four Salesmen of the Apocalypse, the Princess of Pink and the Unknown Boy Soldier*, 2007, mokuhanga woodcut and screen print, 300x300mm, collection of the artist.

FIGURE 11. *Kai Aku Rika*, 2013, screen print, 470x370mm, private collection.



cast bronze) [37] and once again demonstrates Reed's effective use of a wide range of techniques and formats within a unified whole.

In *By-product*, the droplets depicted on the large print are graduated in size and tone, containing fragments of the chemical formulae for the so-called rainbow herbicides used in the Vietnam War. The same formulae feature in their complete form on the rainbow-coloured labels on small tins mounted alongside the large print. The monochromatic drypoints inside the small tins depict some of the deformations suffered by Vietnamese child victims of the defoliants (Figure 9). The focus of both *Endowment* and *By-product* then is the long- lasting intergenerational effect of chemical spraying by the US Army during the Vietnam War. The recipe of the defoliants varied over time and from manufacturer to manufacturer. Legal battles for compensation continue, involving US army veterans and the Vietnamese victims of the contamination, but also soldiers from other countries such as New Zealand. As alluded to above, Reed was in his mid-teens when the Vietnam War commenced. To this day he remembers a high school classmate who joined the New Zealand army and ended up fighting in Vietnam, while he went off university, participating in anti-war marches and registering as a conscientious objector.[38] *By-product* not only alludes to one of the many American wars fought on foreign soil, but also to the social divisions it caused in New Zealand and its long-term impact on New Zealand veterans.

Similar themes reverberate in his contributions to a number of international print portfolios, especially those initiated by Melanie Yazzi (Boulder, Colorado), and his submissions to exhibitions in Estonia, the United States, Spain, Cuba, Mexico and the United Kingdom.[39] The international recognition Reed enjoys as an artist rests almost solely then on his works of protest, in countries where audiences arguably have a greater appreciation of art that sets out 'to snag their eyeballs and their minds.' As implied above, Reed greatly increased his professional profile through his contributions to sixteen multi-national print portfolios, covering a range of themes and printmaking techniques. This included *A time and place Nagasawa 10*, an artist exchange portfolio, on the theme of a time and place of significance. Some of the contributors had first met in 2002, when they attended the artists-in-residence programme at Nagasawa on Awaji Island, Japan, to learn Japanese printmaking techniques. Reed had applied for the residency as an extension of his life-long interest in Japanese visual culture, and he particularly enjoyed his later collaborations with the international group of printmakers he met there. The portfolio was

FIGURE 12. *Man Disappears*, 2002, Michael Reed: 3 double-spreads, drypoint, etching and screen print; Peter Herel: 3 double-spreads, etching and aquatint, 255x130mm paper size, double-spined book. Danie Mellor: typesetting and binding.

initiated and co-managed by Reed and the Dutch artist Nel Pak. Reed also designed and printed the written material which usually accompanies projects of this nature. Reed's contribution was *The Four Salesmen of the Apocalypse, the Princess of Pink and the Unknown Boy Soldier* (Figure 10). The work is one of just a handful of prints where Reed applied what he had learned in Nagasawa. It combines Japanese modes of composition and woodcut techniques with screen print and continues the familiar anti-war message, pointing out his dismay at the rising number of child soldiers. Their fate contrasts sharply with that of 'The 'Princess of Pink', captured in a small circular inset. This is a portrait of Reed's then four-year-old granddaughter, whose angelic features suggest a very different childhood experience.

In 2009, Reed re-visited the mokuhanga technique in *Surimono International*, another international exchange portfolio collaboration with alumni of the Nagasawa artists-in residence programme. It was exhibited that year at Impact 6 in Bristol, alongside a further international print portfolio Reed contributed to, entitled *Another New Zealand, Another United States*. He co-initiated this particular portfolio with Melanie Yazzi, but Reed also edited, designed and produced the accompanying statements and printed the contributions made by New Zealand artists Riki Manuel, Glen Stringer and Wayne Youle. Reed's *Too Much is Never Enough* (2009, screen print, 510x405mm, Collection of Ara Institute of Canterbury) critiques the clean and green image of New Zealand and takes issue with the pollution caused the country's expanding dairy industry. But apart from his commitment to the art of protest, the portfolio also points to another enduring feature of Reed's practice, and that is his willingness to support the creative projects of fellow print makers. This includes the mentoring of younger artists, as many of the contributors to the various exchange portfolios Reed has been involved with are his former students.[40]

At times his collaborations also extended beyond his immediate professional networks. For the *Crossing Paths* international exchange portfolio, he joined forces with Hana O'Regan (Kāi Tahu, Kāti Māmoe, Waitaha) then a senior academic at Christchurch Polytechnic. *Kai Aku Rika* (Figure 11), superimposes O'Regan's bilingual poem *Kai Aku Rika – In My Hands* onto a faint portrait of a young boy. In this work, the written word takes centre stage, while the image has only a supporting role to play. The poem's English version appears in the cursive script favoured by 19th century European colonists, a subtle reminder of the impact European literary traditions had on New Zealand's indigenous culture.

Kai Aku Rika belongs to the part of Reed's overall print oeuvre that is less well known. These are the works that strike a gentler tone, but are connected to his more outspoken images in terms of style, technical experimentation and the effective use of colour. Another example of this resulted from a notable collaboration with Canberra-based Czech printmaker Peter Herel. Herel was artist-in-residence at the Christchurch Polytechnic School of Art and Design in 1999, and although the two men could not be more different in their approach to printmaking, they decided to co-produce a hand-printed, hand-bound book entitled *Man Disappears* (Figure 12), Based on the research undertaken by New Zealand historian Michael King, this delicate ensemble of prints - Reed's far more vigorous images complementing the subtle tonalities preferred by Herel - recounts the history of the Chatham Island Moriori. A copy of their book is held at the Alexander Turnbull Library and the National Library of Australia in Canberra.[41]

Drawing on just a selection of works from a career spanning five decades, this article highlighted that it is possible to balance a commitment to a New Zealand context with a view that New Zealand, while situated on the geographical margins of the world, is a member of the international community, requiring a consistent acknowledgement of those local artists whose work critically reflects on political, social and environmental issues of global significance. As an artist, Reed points the viewer to the less welcome aspects of the human existence, but by doing so highlights again how art, and specifically the sensitive and balanced combination of word and image can capture the complexity of an experience that is otherwise difficult to convey. Reed's life-long commitment to politically motivated art, but also to his largely unacknowledged role as a teacher, facilitator and collaborator has helped him to share human despair alongside hope. His work enabled him to model integrity and a sense of communal and personal responsibility in an age of self-interest, and to appreciate his own privilege while showing empathy for those less fortunate. Reed remains as self-deprecating as ever and networking for the sake of self-promotion is still anathema to him.[42] His focus remains firmly on the technical, aesthetic and ethical challenges of whichever project he is working on and he remains an important New Zealand contributor to art in the service of social justice.

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https://orangebarrelindustries.com/ourindeliblemark/projects/encountering-our-indelible-mark/

ENDNOTES

1. An early example of this was Artists from the South: Paintings, Drawings, Prints. Brooke-Gifford Gallery, Christchurch, April 1977. It featured, amongst others, works by Michael Reed, Barry Cleavin, Don Peebles, Ralph Hotere, Gordon Walters and Joanna Paul.

2. See the artist's CV, as of 2017. (Collection of the author.)

3. While there have been several journal articles and catalogue essays written about particular aspects of Reed's works, his name appeared only twice in surveys on New Zealand art. See Jill McIntosh (ed), Contemporary New Zealand Prints (Wellington: Port Nicholson Press, 1989); Warwick Brown, Another Onehundred New Zealand Artists (Auckland: Godwit, 1996). There have been two articles published on him in Art New Zealand, one being a review of his MFA exhibition, at the Ilam School of Fine Arts, University of Canterbury. See Cassandra Fusco, "One Pacific Viewpoint," Art New Zealand, no 58 (1991): 66-69 &102-103; Dorothee Pauli, Christchurch Art Review, Art New Zealand, no. 91 (1999): 46-48. Some of his work also featured in Elizabeth Rankin, "Disturbing Drapes: The Subversive Powers of Printed Textiles," Art New Zealand, 134, 2010: 52-55.

4. Brett Riley, "Shaping Space", New Zealand Listener, February 15, 1986 (not paginated).

5. Michael Reed, 'A Polemical Post-Script', unpublished essay and documentation supporting a submission in print for a Master of Fine Arts, University of Canterbury, 1999. (Collection of the artist.)

6. The Reed's home was zoned for Riccarton High School, and the much more prestigious Boys High School, but especially the latter, with its insistence on tradition and cadetship rituals, did not appeal at all to him. His family had heard encouraging reports about Hillmorton, and it was thought of as a school with a more modern and liberal-minded outlook on education. Michael Reed, personal communication, interview by author, October 27, 2017.

7. Michael Reed, interview by author, August 17, 2016.

8. It was the studentship that made all the difference to him and his parents, as it meant he could undertake his study with some financial independence and look forward to a secure career in teaching. Michael Reed, interview by author, August 24, 2016.

9. As mentioned, while still at high school, he had an interest in architecture, and even built a number of models, and he had seen some pottery exhibitions in Nelson. When he met Steven Foster, a fellow student at Hillmorton, who had served a semi-apprenticeship as a potter in the UK aged fifteen or so, Reed too, for a while, entertained the notion of becoming an apprentice potter.

10. See for example ArtSchool125, an exhibition held at the Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu to celebrate the 125th jubilee of the Ilam School of Fine Arts. The exhibition was dominated by the many painters who graduated from the school since its inception in 1882. See http://christchurchartgallery.org.nz/artschool125/About/index.html

11. Michael Reed, interview by author, October 27, 2017. The other reason was that he was not enamoured with the work of Rudi Gopas, who taught the painting majors at the time.

12. In his first generic year of study, Reed attended the following classes:

13. Drawing (figurative and observational), with Eileen Mayo

14. Drawing (technical, and Roman lettering), with Florence Atkins

15. Painting, with Doris Lusk

16. Sculpture, with Tom Taylor

17. Basic Studies (modelled on the Bauhaus 'Grundkurs') with Don Peebles

18. History of Art, with Richard Lovell-Smith

19. History of Architecture, with Tom Taylor

20. Reed had read William Bradford Huie's Three Lives for Mississippi, first published in 1965, and was deeply impressed by this vivid account of the murder of three Civil Rights activists in Neshoba County, Mississippi. He owns a revised edition of this book. See William Bradford Huie, Three Lives for Mississippi (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 2000).

21. Reed was awarded the ANZ Bank Award for Contemporary New Zealand Printmaking, 1970, for Joybox, being a co-winner of the award that year alongside Marilyn Webb.

22. See Elizabeth Rankin, "Picturing Protest: New Zealand Artists and the Springbok Rugby Tour Protest", Journal of New Zealand Art History, no. 28 (2007):18-19. The picture is based on a photograph by Don McCullin.

23. Elizabeth Rankin, "Picturing Protest", 18. Proof of this is a compelling photograph in Truth, which features a line of police personnel facing a row of the Christchurch protesters holding Reed's placards. New Zealand Truth, 25 August 1981, front page.

24. See Eduardo Paolozzi, Lost Magic Kingdoms and Six Paper Moons from Nahuatl (London: British Museum Publications, 1985). Reed purchased a copy of the catalogue in 1989.

25. Prior to commencing his MFA, Reed studied Pacific art with Karen Stevens at the University of Canterbury Art History Department. At the Canterbury Museum in Christchurch, Roger Fyfe, currently the Senior Curator Human History at the museum gave him access to many Pacific Island artefacts. A little know screen print which reflects his deep appreciation of Pacific visual culture is Ngarara, (1993, screen print, paper size 420x 294mm, private collection), which not only quotes images and notes taken from his museum sketchbooks, but also features a circle of stylised skinks, panicked by approaching footfall. This, in part, recalls family outings to Quail Island, which introduced Reed's sons to local skinks. Michael Reed, interview by author, August 24, 2016.

26. Michael Reed, interview by author, August 24, 2016.

27. Michael Reed, interview by author, August 24, 2016.

28. Michael Reed, interview by author, 20 March, 2017.

29. See Elizabeth Rankin, "Collateral: Printmaking as Social Commentary,"Takahe, 75, no.1 (2012): 33-40; Dorothee Pauli, "Picturing Peace," Junctures: The Journal for Thematic Dialogue, no. 14, (2011): 61-74.

30. Artist statement, exhibition pamphlet, Pictures with Stories: Stories with Pictures, Chamber Gallery, Rangiora, 2006. (Collection of the artist).

31. See Keith Sinclair (ed.), Distance Looks our Way (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1961).

32. Michael Reed, interview by author, August 29, 2017.

33. Rt. Hon. Helen Clark (Prime Minister and Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage) "My Favourite" Bulletin of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, no.26, 2001.

34. See for example John Freeman-Moir, "Neither Shall They Learn War Anymore," The Medal, no. 47 (2005): 61-73.

35. Michael Reed, interview by author, August 17, 2017.

36. For a discussion of retrospective of Smith medals, see Holland Cotter, "Art Review: David Smith's Anti-Medals," New York Times, January 6, 1995. http://www.nytimes.com/1995/01/06/arts/art-review-david-smith-s-anti-medals.html

37. For a description of the exhibition, see http://www.britishmuseum.org/about_us/news_and_press/press_releases/2009/medals_of_dishonour.aspx

38. http://www.britishmuseum.org/about_us/news_and_press/press_releases/2009/medals_of_dishonour.aspx

39. John Freeman-Moir, "Neither Shall They Learn War Anymore," 61.

40. Allan Marriot, Mud Beneath My Boots: A Poignant Memoir of the Effects of War on a Young New Zealander, (Auckland: Harper Collins, 2005).

41. The Medal, no.71, (2017): 70.

42. See Elizabeth Rankin, "Collateral: Printmaking as Social Commentary," Takahe, 75, no.1 (2012): 33-40.

43. Reed's Drapes for Real Men, another unflinching indictment of the arms industry, were exhibited as part of 'Drape', an exhibition at CoCA, also featuring the work of Katharina Jaeger and Sandra Thomson, as part of the Christchurch Arts Festival, 2009. See Elizabeth Rankin, "Disturbing Drapes: the Subversive Powers of Printed Textiles," Art New Zealand, 134, 2010: 52-55. One of the works (alongside a later example) also featured in Collateral: Printmaking as Social Commentary, Gus Fisher Gallery, 1 July - 20 August 2011. (Curated and catalogue written by Elizabeth Rankin). The two Runners for the Corridors of Power were also included in this exhibition, as well as in 'Giving Voice: The Art of Dissent', Salamanca Art Centre, Tasmania, 1 August - 14 September 2014.

44. See https://orangebarrelindustries.com/ourindelible-mark/projects/encountering-our-indelible-mark/

45. See https://michaelreedprint.wordpress.com/medallions/

46. Michael Reed, interview by author, February 12, 2021.

47. For a discussion of the significance, function and increasing popularity of exchange portfolios, see

48. A further example of Reed using an international exchange portfolio to mentor his former students is The 60s, another collaboration initiated by Melanie Yazzi. This included works by Reed, and his former students Hannah Page, Ben Reid and Sam Reed. These three artists were included at the request of Melanie Yazzi. That said, it is outside the parameters of this essay to fully analyse the legacy of Reed's teaching career.

49. At the time, Reed considered his collaboration with Herel to be a very welcome extension of his MFA studies and a much-valued learning opportunity regarding the technical and aesthetic aspects of printmaking. Michael Reed, interview by author, December 30, 2017.

50. Aware of the limited commercial appeal of his more recent work, Reed has not approached dealer galleries for years. Michael Reed, interview by author, December 21, 2017.

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.'[1] 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 archetypical Victorian painter with works in Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki's collection, as featuring creations of 'highly-scented soap.'[2] 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.'[3] 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,[4] 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.'[5]

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, *Wunderrūma: 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.[6] 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.[7] 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.[8] 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 archetypical 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."'[9]

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.'[10] 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.[11] 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.[12] 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.'[13] *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.'[14] 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).[15] 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.'[16] 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.'[17] 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.[18]

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.[19] 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.[20] 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 Zealandis home for people of many identities.

"It's nice when parts of the past can remain a foreign country"[21]

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 Tamaki, 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 multicultural 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.'[22] *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.'[23] 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 wharenui (meeting house) that contains important

figurative and naturalistic paintings by followers of the Māori prophet Te Kooti.'[24] 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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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.

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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/.

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N (Notes/Endnotes): Jock Phillips and Terry Hearn, Settlers: New Zealand Immigrants from England, Ireland and Scotland 1800-1945 (Auckland, New Zealand: Auckland University Press, 2008), p.41.

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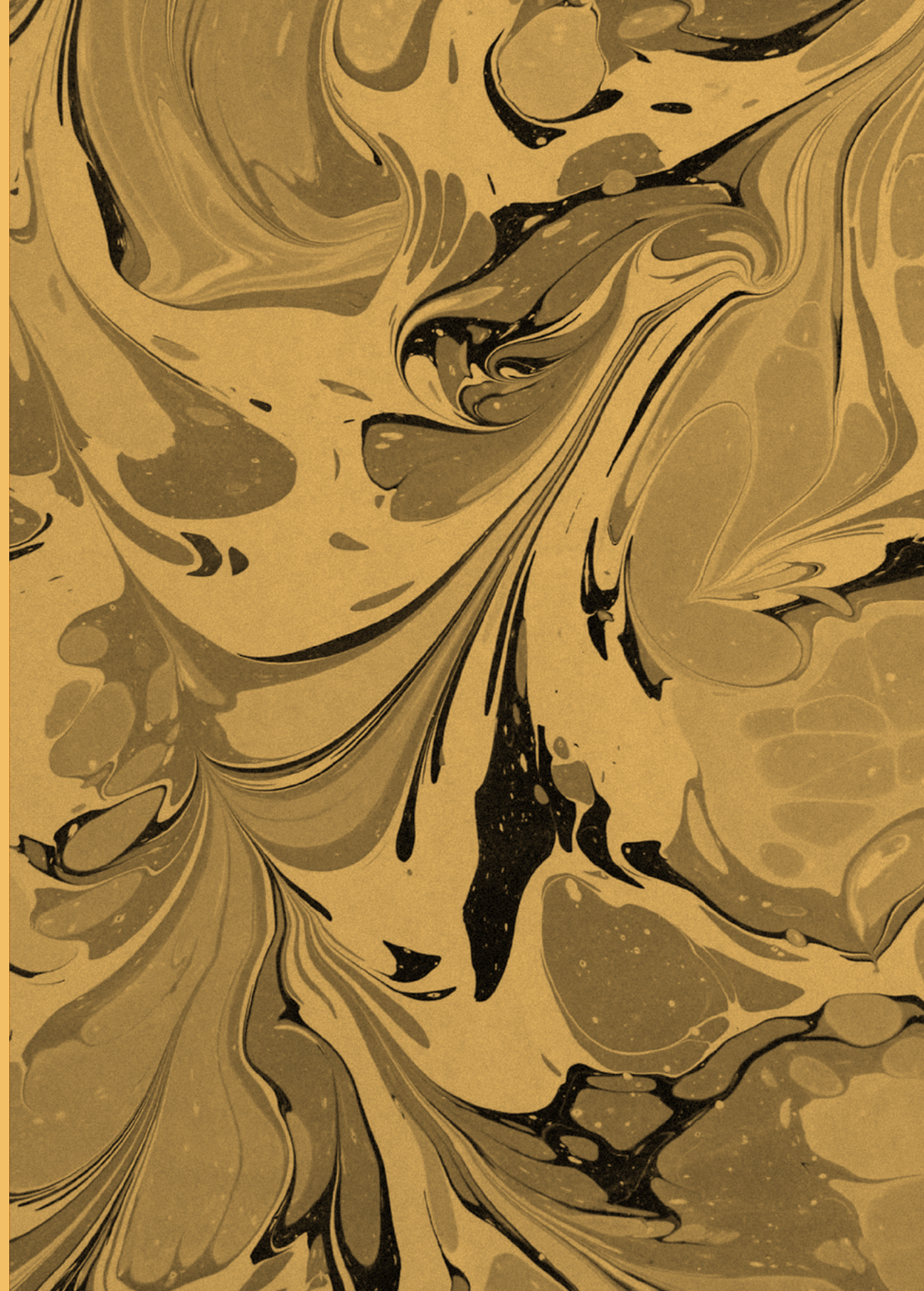


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