



QUARTERLY

DUNEDIN PUBLIC ART GALLERY **SOCIETY** NEWSLETTER



OTAGO HAS A CALMNESS, A COLDNESS, ALMOST A CLASSIC GEOLOGICAL ORDER. IT IS, PERHAPS, AN EGYPTIAN LANDSCAPE, A LAND OF CALM ORDERLY GRANITE. ...BIG HILLS STOOD IN FRONT OF THE LITTLE HILLS, WHICH ROSE UP DISTANTLY ACROSS THE PLAIN FROM THE FLAT LAND: THERE WAS A LANDSCAPE OF SPLENDOUR, AND ORDER AND PEACE. [COLIN MCCAHON, *BEGINNINGS LANDFALL 80* P.363-64 DECEMBER 1966]

A LAND OF GRANITE

McCAHON AND OTAGO

07 MARCH - 28 JUNE 2020

The 2019 centenary of the birth of Colin McCahon led to a series of exhibitions nationwide considering this important artist's life, work and legacy. In March, Dunedin Public Art Gallery will be opening *A Land of Granite: McCahon and Otago*, an exhibition which looks specifically at the deep connection between McCahon's painting and the landscape of Dunedin and the Otago region.

McCahon was raised in Ōtepoti Dunedin, had family connections to Oamaru, and lived in both centres during his childhood. Some of his earliest paintings, completed while a student at Dunedin School of Art in the late 1930s, depict familiar locations around the city such as Woodhaugh, the Dunedin Botanical Gardens and Tomahawk Beach. Other works, such as *Harbour Cone from Peggy's Hill* (1939) and *Otago*

Peninsula (1946-49), focus on the landscape of the Otago Peninsula, representing important developments in McCahon's early artistic career. *A Land of Granite* will be the first occasion that these seminal early paintings have been gathered together at Dunedin Public Art Gallery, supported by working drawings and studies that together illustrate the important role that this landscape played in McCahon's artistic development.

A Land of Granite draws from the major art collections of this region: Hocken Collections Uare Taoka o Hākena; Forrester Gallery Oamaru; Dunedin Public Library; and Dunedin Public Art Gallery; as well as other major New Zealand art collections. The final section of the exhibition sees McCahon return to the landscape of Otago in the late 1960s in the tightly cohesive *North Otago* series. Painted from the distance of Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, this series articulates both McCahon's strong and enduring connection to these southern lands, and his artistic journey in the decades since.

#6

MAR-MAY 2020

COLIN McCAHON *Otago Peninsula* 1946-1949 (cover image)
Oil on gesso on board. Collection of Dunedin Public Libraries Kā Kete Wānaka o Ōtepoti, Rodney Kennedy bequest. Courtesy of the Colin McCahon Research and Publication Trust

Like us on Facebook at: www.facebook.com/DPAGSociety/

EXHIBITIONS: CONTINUED



left: YONA LEE **Lamp in Transit** 2019 (detail). Object, stainless steel. Courtesy the artist and Fine Arts, Sydney.



right: KAWITA VATANAJYANKUR **Dye** 2018. HD video, single channel (7 min, 30 sec) Collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Purchased 2018 with funds from the Dunedin City Council + EMILY HARTLEY-SKUDDER **Staging Your Comeback** 2020 Vinyl flooring, PVC wall stickers, wall paint, oil on linen, found basin and bath, MDF, soap, pine and aluminium trim. Courtesy of the artist and Jonathan Smart Gallery

YONA LEE: SUCCESSION 22 FEBRUARY - 14 JUNE 2020

In November 2019, Yona Lee arrived in Ōtepoti Dunedin to begin a 12-week residency at Dunedin Public Art Gallery as part of the Aotearoa New Zealand Visiting Artist Programme. Moving between large-scale, site-specific installations comprised of stainless-steel pipe and found objects, and smaller, more discrete sculptures, Lee's practice shares a language and materiality with urban infrastructure, commercial interiors and architectural design. Lee had exhibited work at the Lyon Biennale of Contemporary Art just prior to her arrival, and the residency provided her the space and support to research and develop a new and innovative body of work. Based out of the workshops at the Dunedin School of Art, Lee produced a suite of 23 small sculptures – a body of work that allowed Lee to experiment with line, form, scale and materials. Moving beyond the large-scale installations that have defined her recent exhibition outcomes, *Succession* is the first time that Lee has exhibited a large suite of small sculptures in one space. By doing so, *Succession* celebrates the potential of working in series – allowing viewers to explore nuanced and accentuated variances across multiple forms.

ADDITIONS + ALTERATIONS 15 FEBRUARY - 28 JUNE 2020

Additions + Alterations took its starting point from a group of eight works drawn from the Gallery's contemporary collection. Using the notion of re-framing or re-positioning as a thematic tool, this group of works all have their subject matter shifted in some way, whether that is redefining the role of human body, manipulating time, scale or materiality, or playing with the functions or expectations of an everyday object. These works, by Nick Austin, Kushana Bush, Steve Carr, Fiona Connor, Michael Parekowhai, Yvonne Todd, Erica van Zon and Kawita Vatanajyankur, also represent new acquisitions made over the recent period, reflecting key patrons and donations, as well as outcomes of the Gallery's exhibition and residency programmes.

Wellington-based artist Emily Hartley-Skudder was then invited to develop a new body of work made in direct response to these recent acquisitions – a response that resulted in a series of constructed environments which act to subvert the gallery's typical aesthetic. Hartley-Skudder's work, *Staging Your Comeback*, a tongue-in-cheek title referencing a popular makeover book for women, presents her photorealistic paintings and the works from the Gallery's collection in a series of faux-domestic or showroom-style installations that she designed. From bathrooms to formal living rooms, *Staging Your Comeback* asks us to question the impact of context, the role of art as a commodity, and the relationship between an authentic or constructed experience.

COLLECTION: FOCUS



GRAHAME SYDNEY **HINTERLAND** 1997-98

Oil on linen canvas

Collection Dunedin Public Art Gallery

One of my most memorable DPAG experiences was the 1999 Grahame Sydney retrospective. I found myself surrounded by paintings that had a luminescent aura about them. It was as if there was a light behind each work, radiating the images from the walls. Crafted with rare skill, Sydney's works in oil, watercolour, and egg tempera all glow with colour and depth. *Hinterland* is one of three Sydney paintings in the DPAG collection, along with several etchings and drawings.

The word 'hinterland' refers to the remote areas of a country or an area lying beyond what is visible or known. The painting *Hinterland* depicts a mass of tussock-covered rolling hills that softly fold in and out of each other like bunched silk. Late evening light gently lifts the curves; the shadows that create contours are black in the foreground, fading to the blue of distance as the space recedes. Our exploring eyes rove these hills and vales, simply enjoying the labyrinth space until we are quietly pulled to a valley in the distance which seemingly leads to a silent beyond.

Grahame Sydney is one of Aotearoa New Zealand's most esteemed painters. His work is held in our major public institutions and in numerous private collections. He is particularly known for his much-loved paintings

of Central Otago, an area for which he has an especial fondness. But there is an intangible quality in Sydney's landscapes that take them beyond simple realism - and therein lies their allure. Sydney describes 'realist painting' as simply depiction. Art, by contrast, "goes deeper than the easy skills of the trained hand. [...] it revolves around the essential question of just why an artist chooses this or that manner of expression, and what it might tell us about them, and ourselves."

Writer Vincent O'Sullivan sees Sydney's arrangements of formal aesthetic effects as "implied abstraction." *Hinterland* fits this observation well. This painting is just as much illusory form as it is an image of a landscape. In *Hinterland* there is no sign of the living, no greenery or nourishing water, yet one feels that these hills heave with life, as if this endless land is itself a living body. We are reminded that earth itself is a living organism over which we humans simply pass.

This is a large painting reflecting the wide and open landscape that inspired it. We know such landscapes exist, yet there is a sense of the ephemeral here: while we delight in the untouched beauty, we wonder if this moment in time will last, for both ourselves and the land. Paintings such as *Hinterland* inspire narratives and reflections that are especially meaningful to the people of Otago. As Vincent O'Sullivan maintains, Sydney's paintings "begin as his, but conclude as ours." It is a privilege and pleasure to have such work by Sydney in the DPAG collection.

Carolyn Guytonbeck



FAREWELL

TO A DPAG SUPERSTAR: DOREEN WHISTON

Anyone who has attended an event at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery could not have missed seeing a petite gorgeous blonde, with bright blue eyes, a lovely smile, and always immaculately dressed. This is Doreen Whiston, who has not only impressed as the 'fashionista' of the Gallery but also by the quiet manner in which she has carried out her role as Functions Co-ordinator.

After more than thirty years of service, Doreen will soon be retiring from her role at the DPAG. We of the Society Council are immensely grateful for all Doreen's organisational support, which she and her team have so willingly and efficiently provided to the Society.

However, we are not the only ones to have benefitted from Doreen's skills. She has a long history with the Gallery, beginning around 1989 when the Gallery was located in Logan Park. She was appointed PA to then Gallery director, Frank Dickinson. Doreen maintained this position with the three succeeding directors. The Gallery moved to the Octagon in 1996, and in 2000 Doreen moved on to become Functions Co-ordinator, a position she has held ever since.

This isn't surprising, really, as Doreen's interests encapsulate this role. She loves the creativity of food presentation, cooking and entertaining, hosting friends and most of all, spending time with her children and grandchildren. Our very best wishes for a happy retirement go to Doreen and her husband Merv in their permanent move to Twizel.

Rosemary Crick

EVENTS

AUTUMN: MARCH-MAY

MARCH 5 THU 10.30AM MEMBERS' TOUR:

Wylde Willow Garden, Abbotsford (\$10 admission charge). If you'd like to join the tour, please contact DPAGS administrator Chris Boyd at dpagsoc@xtra.co.nz.

MARCH 18 WED 10.30AM COFFEE MORNING:

Peter Simpson: The Art of Writing about Colin McCahon. Art writer and historian Peter Simpson discusses his new book *Colin McCahon: There is Only One Direction* in relation to the Gallery's McCahon exhibition. Copies of the book are for sale in the shop, and a signing session will follow.

APRIL 15 WED 10.30AM COFFEE MORNING:

Henry Johnston: The Art of Taiko Drumming. Professor Henry Johnson, School of Performing Arts, University of Otago and Asian music scholar, will discuss aspects of Asian music, particularly the art of Taiko drumming.

MAY 20 WED 10.30AM COFFEE MORNING:

Jane Avery: The Art of Eco-Fur Couture. Fashion designer Jane Avery will talk about her wild rabbit eco-fur couture: coats, jackets and accessories which are sourced responsibly from a New Zealand pest resource. Avery operates her business, *Lapin*, from her Dunedin premises.

CONTACT:

The DPAG Society Office
03 474 3264 | PO Box 566
Dunedin 9058
email: dpagsoc@xtra.co.nz

GRAY'S STUDIO

FRAMING WORKSHOP
AND
GALLERY

78 HIGHGATE
ROSLYN

Specialising in the
conservation framing
of artwork

03 477 0990

workshop@graysstudio.co.nz

10% discount for members



dunedin public art gallery shop

The Gallery Shop stocks an excellent range of giftware, books, cards, postcards, speciality magazines and art related products. It also has exhibition merchandise, prints, cards and catalogues.

Society members receive 20% discount at the gallery shop!

[And please remember to present your membership card!]

Businesses that provide discounts to members

Art Zone
(excludes framing)

Gray's Studio
Nevill Studios Ltd

Skaf Rugs Ltd

The DPAG Shop
(20% off all purchases)

The Framers Room
University Book Shop

