

An impressionist painting of a woman with short brown hair, wearing a vibrant red dress with a white collar, seated at a wooden table. She is looking down at her hands, which are resting on the table. The background is a soft, warm-toned interior with a vase of flowers on the table. The style is characterized by visible brushstrokes and a warm, dappled light.

Sarjeant Quarterly



volume **46**

September - November 2012

From the Senior Curator

by Greg Anderson

The Sarjeant Gallery is possessed of a treasure few other galleries in New Zealand can match. Our Collection of more than 5500 works spans four centuries of art history and holds countless stories waiting to be told. The Gallery's regularly changing schedule of exhibitions includes commissioned work, site-specific installations, travelling exhibitions and Tylee Cottage Residency shows, but it is the Collection that is at the heart of our programming.

These collection-based shows, which illustrate the numerous and varied sections within our holdings, are often dictated by the space in which we are able to show them. Many art museums are able to keep large sections of their collections out for long periods, so that familiar favourites are available for frequent viewing. This however, is not the case at the Sarjeant. Instead, with the Gallery's lack of environmental control, we tend to show large portions of our Collection for shorter duration exhibitions. This is particularly true when exhibiting delicate items such as drawings, photographs and other works on paper. While some may view this as a constraint we see it as a challenge. During the past two years we have put together, among our regular schedule, fifteen Collection shows including four hundred and fifty works in all media. This relatively quick turnover in exhibitions has meant that we have been able to focus on the development of narrative in the exhibitions, meaning that each show can be themed and contextualised. Formal aspects in a variety of artworks have been contrasted; works from Tylee residents have been juxtaposed with older Collection works; Edith Collier works have been contextualised in many different ways with selected Collection pieces; and most recently *Hibernation* by our Assistant Curator, Sarah McClintock, has explored the sensibilities and colours of the winter season using a thoughtful assemblage of very diverse Collection works.

What this discussion ultimately leads to is, in part, the rationale for the Sarjeant Gallery Redevelopment Project. This project will see the existing and new Gallery spaces brought up to a very high standard in both environmental control and technological fit-out. Not only will we be able to develop a much greater variety of exhibitions, we will also be able to present rarely seen works in new formats and likely for longer periods. Although our displays will never be static, the duration of these shows will be longer and will enable our audiences to spend more time enjoying and revisiting our wealth of artworks. Our next such Collection show, entitled *Something in the Water*, opens 24 November and will be on view in the East Wing.

Cover: Ida Carey (New Zealand, b.1891, d.1982), *Woman Sitting in a Chair*, oil on board, Collection of the Sarjeant Gallery Te Whare O Rehua, Whanganui, 1982/26/2.

Members

A warm welcome to new Gallery members Liz and Peter Cullen.

The Gallery is pleased to acknowledge the following as Corporate Members:

ASB Bank, Bryce Smith & Associates Ltd, Central City Pharmacy, ComputerCare NZ Ltd, Doyle + Associates – Chartered Accountants, Energy Direct NZ., GDM Group Ltd., Mars Pet Care, Mary-Ann Dickie, Meteor Design & Print and OPD, Richard Millward & Associates, Nicola Williams, Pamela Williams Family Trust, pattillo Ltd., Seresin Estate, Te Reo Irirangi O Wanganui – AWA FM, The Radio Network Wanganui, Pak'n Save, Wanganui Branch – New Zealand Institute of Chartered Accountants, Wanganui Chronicle, Whanganui UCOL – Creative Programmes

We value the support of our Corporate Members and would encourage you to utilise their services whenever possible.

Education News

by Sietske Jansma

Education has been busy with students visiting the exhibitions: *Whare Taonga* and *Hibernation*. Both shows have been great to explore with students.

Hibernation has provided a good platform to discuss warm and cold colours and those that we associate with winter. The abstract nature of works by Hotere, Mrkusich and Thornley allowed students to use their imagination to talk about the ideas and feelings of winter that the images provoked. Student work inspired by the exhibition ranged from screen prints of snowflakes to prints of wintery landscapes, animals in snow and snow storms using pastel and white paint.

After viewing Whare Taonga students created their own works inspired by Rona Ngahua Osborne's quilts and Alexis Neal's whariki (woven mats). They made quilts with a geometric twist, focusing on fabric shapes ironed onto a small piece of calico. This activity came with the challenge of cutting fabric and for many students the new experience of using a hot iron. In making a whariki students discovered that weaving is a tricky business and even to two can trip you up when you are weaving a pattern. All the results were bright and rewarding.

This term we ran workshops with local artist Catherine Macdonald and students from Wanganui Girls' College. We visited Catherine's studio, which was a great opportunity to see how a practising artist works and see a range of her work in one place. Students explored numerous drawing techniques and were challenged to draw within a time limit and to really look at and observe their subject matter.

Term three has definitely flown by and we look forward to a new season of exhibitions for term four.

Members of the Sarjeant Gallery

Things have been a bit quiet for the Sarjeant Members Executive recently with uncertainty around the use of Sarjeant Building.

Planning is now underway for the 2012 AGM which will be held on the 16 October at 7.30pm at the Sarjeant. Senior Curator Greg Anderson will be updating the membership on the progress on the redevelopment and on the current situation with the Sarjeant building at the meeting.

The Members Executive has now taken over the management of the Members Database and subscription notices for the 2012/2013 year will be sent out shortly. Membership of the Gallery has continued to grow slowly and the Gallery continues to attract a regular stream of visitors to view the exhibitions.

The Council is hopeful of hearing the outcome of its application to Government for funding for the redevelopment by the end of September. Once this is know it will allow planning to proceed in earnest.

The Executive has recently made applications for funding to purchase a number of Solander Boxes which are specialist containers to store some of the Sarjeant's precious works on paper. We have just been advised that we have been successful in obtaining a grant of \$5000 from the Whanganui Community Foundation and are waiting to hear the result of other applications. The individual boxes cost between \$400 and \$500 (depending on size) and we would eventually like to purchase forty which will see a substantial part of the collection properly stored. The Members Society will also be contributing \$2000 from its own funds for the project.

Ian McGowan
President

Collection focus: Medici secretaire, c. 1760. Unknown Maker

In 1927 the Sarjeant received an unlikely gift for its collection, a finely crafted secretaire, which began its life in Italy in the 18th Century, towards the end of the prominent Medici family's rule. Among their many achievements, this family were responsible for the patronage of some of the greatest Renaissance artists, and art and architecture flourished during this time.

This Medici secretaire is a rare object to find in New Zealand, and a prime example of craftsmanship from this era. A drop front desk, it is serpentine fronted and veneered with burr walnut. It is delicately inlaid with ivory floral designs and a crest or coat of arms, possibly a symbol of the amalgamation of two families. Its upper central frieze remains the most intriguing, depicting the remaining silhouettes of classically rendered ivory figures in a procession or ceremony. However time, the New Zealand environment and well-meaning but misdirected attempts to 'fix' the secretaire's ailing condition, had left this work in need of some professional care.

In 2008, the Sarjeant Gallery was granted funding from the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board, to undertake remedial conservation on some of our key pieces of international significance. Remedial conservation could be described as the alchemy of chemistry and art history. A very specialist task, conservators cannot train in New Zealand, and study overseas at various institutions within Europe, the United Kingdom, North America and Australia. Remedial conservation is not about 'fixing', but stabilising an artwork, allowing its story to be revealed like a patina over time.

It would take a rather focussed research trip to Italy to decipher the symbolism used in this piece of furniture, and we may never know how or why it came to be in New Zealand. However, part of the story of our secretaire may have been revealed during its conservation. While putting the finishing touches on this piece, conservator Detlef Klein discovered a group of faded pencil signatures on the inner base of the top drawer. What



■ *Medici secretaire*, c. 1760, Italian walnut with ivory inlay. Collection of the Sarjeant Gallery Te Whare O Rehua, Whanganui. Pictured after conservation.

do these commemorate? Are they related to the intriguing scene on the central frieze, or the curious family crest? Bringing these pieces together becomes like solving a mystery, and we can make an educated guess that perhaps, this secretaire was made as a wedding gift.

It is a constant wonder how objects related to such a magnificent time find their way to New Zealand. It is also a tribute to the Sarjeant to have had support for so many years, in the form of such unique gifts for the people of this region and the rest of the country to enjoy. This Medici secretaire and a Medici bureau bookcase will be returned home soon when their conservation is complete, and will be on display before the end of the year.

Sian van Dyk
Curator of Collections



■ Edith Collier (New Zealand, b.1885, d.1964)
Mrs. Ponui, Kawhia, 1927, oil on hardboard
 Gift of Mrs H. White, Wanganui, Collection of the Sarjeant Gallery, Te Whare O Rehua Whanganui, 1972/2/1



■ Fiona Clark (New Zealand, b.1954), *Netta Wharehoka (nee Waru)*, 1982, cibachrome print. Collection of the Sarjeant Gallery, Te Whare O Rehua Whanganui, 1986/2/9



Toi / Mahara

4 August – 25 November

When Charles Frederick Goldie created his portraits of Māori subjects in the early Twentieth century he did so believing he was documenting a dying race. His paintings were going to serve as memorials to a departed race, and in a way they do. His portraits, like the paintings in this exhibition by Louis Steele, Charles Barraud and J. A. Gilfillan, act as painted memories of traditions, whakapapa and a unique way of life which is in many ways different from today. Coloured by each artist's European heritage these paintings are romanticised views of 'noble savages' and curiosities. Absent from them is a uniquely Māori point of view.

Contemporary Māori artists question their place in the art world and the role Māori traditions and beliefs have in modern life. Cliff Whiting combines traditional carving with contemporary art aesthetics in *Korero*, Shane Cotton explores the role of landscape and language in *Tera Tētahi Manu*, while Darcy Nicholas in *The Land is My Ancestor I* and Emily Karaka with *Tangata Kore (Cut Off Man)* explore whenua (land) and its complex place in New Zealand history.

Art is taonga, treasures which connect us to the past. *Inanga, Heitiki, North Island (Toru Tekau ma Rua)*, *Okains Bay Maori and Colonial Museum* by Fiona Pardington fits within the tradition of the photographic still life. However she is not interested in simply capturing the physical presence of taonga, but also its spiritual importance as a tangible link to the past.

Fiona Clark's photographs of Te Āti Awa kuia (women elders) are flanked by Edith Collier's *Mrs. Ponui, Kawhia* and Goldie's *Wiripine Ninia - A Ngatiawa Chieftainess*, illustrating the connections art can create across time. The shared expressions on these women's faces reach across generations and across artistic media.

Sarah McClintock
 Assistant Curator

The exhibitions introductory text is in English and Te Reo Māori.

■ Fiona Pardington (Ngāi Tahu, b.1961)
Inanga, Heitiki, North Island (Toru Tekau ma Rua), *Okains Bay Maori and Colonial Museum*, 2002
 gold-toned silver/gelatin photograph. Collection of the Sarjeant Gallery, Te Whare O Rehua Whanganui, 2008/8/1

Art/ Memory

6 October - 25 November

Memory is tricky; it can at once aid and fool us. For centuries we have developed and relied on memory aids to deal with this complexity, from pen and paper to memory sticks. However one of the oldest and most constant memory aids has been art. From cave art to photography and painting, visually capturing a moment, scene, person or idea has been a central part of artistic practice.

Some art works have memory at their core and explore the function of memory itself. In Christine Webster's *Rememberer* we see a bejewelled and scantily clad woman cradling a gilt frame to her face. The woman's expression is one of longing and wistfulness, as she reflects on her glory days she is the manifestation of an 'obsession with memory'.¹ She exemplifies the struggle between the perceptions we have of ourselves, the way we remember ourselves, and reality. She embodies the stereotype that the best days are experienced in our youth and the memories of that sustain our later years.



■ James Scott (New Zealand, b.1877, d.1932), *Looking Backwards*, oil on canvas. Collection of the Sarjeant Gallery Te Whare O Rehua, Whanganui, 1954/4/3

Art has the ability to transport us to another place and time. In the work of Vivian Smith, Ida Carey and Walter Bayes we see the fashion, faces, colour and life of the early decades of the Twentieth Century in a way that books and black and white photographs cannot capture. Peter McIntyre's paintings show the Wanganui of the 1950s in scenes so familiar and yet so different to today. They are not simply memories of the past, but are also memorialising that which affects art. Artists can be motivated to honour a great figure from the past or a personal friend through their work, or equally the owners of an artwork can be inspired by a loved one to gift it to a gallery in their memory. These works enhance the Sarjeant Gallery Collection and are part of our rich heritage.

Sarah McClintock
Assistant Curator

[1] Olivier Zahm, *Fatal Song* (text translated from French) written for Clark, T. and Curnow, W. (eds), *The Players, from Pleasures & Dangers*, Longman & Paul, 1991, <http://www.christinewebster.co.uk/texts/text1.html>, Accessed 30 August 2012.

■ Christine Webster (New Zealand, b.1958), *Rememberer*, 1991, cibachrome print. On loan from the artist, 1997/15/9.A-D

The Clark Collection/Creative New Zealand Scholarship United Kingdom, 2012

By Greg Donson
Curator/Public Programmes Manager

The Clark Collection/Creative New Zealand scholarship was established in 2003 by financier, art connoisseur and heritage advocate Errol Clark with significant support from Creative New Zealand. This unique scholarship provides an opportunity for New Zealand professionals in the built heritage and decorative arts field to expand their knowledge through attending the prestigious Attingham Summer School in England. The scholarship also offers recipients three short internships with the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, the National Trust and English Heritage. This year I had the very good fortune and absolute privilege of being awarded the ninth scholarship and in mid June I left for the UK for nearly seven

■ Broughton Castle, Oxfordshire, England



weeks of what was to be the most intense period of learning I had experienced since my University career.

My first internship was with the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the world's leading museum of art and design. This extraordinary and gargantuan institution is a treasure house and for me was museum mecca, even after a week there I still felt as though there were still areas of the museum that I had yet to see. During my time there I had appointments with curators working in the photography, ceramic and glass departments as well as staff in the contemporary department whose focus is on a regularly changing contemporary programme and associated events. Fortunately my visit coincided with a major exhibition investigating British Design since 1948 and another surveying the work of noted British Designer Thomas Heatherwick.

The second week was spent with the National Trust visiting a range of properties and studying how their collections were looked after and presented to visitors. Coming from a gallery environment it was very interesting viewing interiors that were relatively static in their display and to hear of the different strategies that each place had developed to ensure that visitors remained engaged. Highlights of my week were a visit to the *Sandham Memorial Chapel* at Burghclere where British painter Stanley Spencer

completed an epic series of large-scale murals between 1927 - 1932 to commemorate the 'forgotten dead' of the First World War. Another highlight was a day at *Waddesdon Manor*, a nineteenth century house built in the style of a French Chateau where there was a wonderful series of works by ceramicist Edmund de Waal that were made in response to the rich collections and interiors. Coupled with this was an outdoor sculpture exhibition developed in partnership with Christies that showcased the work of a number of internationally renowned sculptors.

For my time with English Heritage I spent two days on the Isle of Wight visiting *Osborne House*, the private home of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. This Italianate residence houses an amazing collection of furniture and art that is a reflection of the couple's personal tastes. It was great to spend a focused period of time familiarising myself with such a rich and varied collection.

The second half of my time in the UK was spent participating in the Attingham Summer School. Now in its 61st year, the Summer School was established by the Attingham Trust in 1952. The summer school allows participants to study the architectural and social history of the English Country House and its gardens and landscape setting. I was one of forty eight participants from around the world who for eighteen days had the privilege of visiting properties in Sussex,

Day to Day

Scenes of Domesticity by Edith Collier

15 September – 20 January

Throughout her career Edith Collier spent time living in the small rural communities of St. Ives and Bibury in England, Bonmahon in Ireland and Kawhia in New Zealand. In these villages she lived with locals and became part of their daily lives. This led to a great empathy and affiliation in her art with everyday 'peasant' life. With sensitivity and care her paintings explore simple domestic duties such as peeling potatoes or visiting the local market.

The subject matter most accessible to Edith, as a woman, was the domestic: interior scenes, women and children. In the early Twentieth

Century these people and places were the traditional domain of the female artist, this was their social sphere and daily lives. It also seems that it was in these spaces that Edith was the most comfortable and it is here that some of her best artistic work arose. Edith's artistic curiosity also led her to paint landscapes, urban scenes and male portraiture, often with a domestic underpinning: the landscapes depict homes and villages, urban streets show laundry in drying outside buildings and men are frequently depicted indoors.

Inanimate objects, the items we choose to fill our homes with, the places we sleep, sit, eat and cook, can reveal as much about a person as a portrait. While a portrait reveals a person's appearance, a person's home is their private space, hidden from all but family and friends, through which we are able to see to what is important to the occupant and how they live their life. In 1888 Vincent Van Gogh famously painted two images he referred to as portraits, one of Gauguin and the other a self-portrait. The remarkable thing about these paintings is that each simply depicts a chair. Van Gogh has reduced his sitter to an everyday object and infuses it with the life of his

Current Exhibitions

Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Dorset. In total we visited thirty properties and studied their contents including paintings, sculpture, furniture, ceramics, silver, textiles and other applied arts – as well as the planning, decorative treatment and use of the interiors. Visits to properties were supplemented by an excellent series of lectures which gave further context to the places we were visiting.

Participating in the Summer School really was a once in a lifetime opportunity. We were granted very privileged access to a wide range of properties, many of which are still under private ownership. I can safely say that the summer school was a perfect blend of a curatorial boot camp, rehabilitation and being an active participant in an eighteen day episode of the Antiques Road Show.

Coupled with this were visits to galleries such as the National Gallery, Portrait Gallery, Tate Modern, Britain and Liverpool and also the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool and the Lady Lever Art Gallery in Port Sunlight. In summary the scholarship was a wonderful experience that broadened my horizons and gave me many ideas to pursue.

subject. Frances Hodgkins, Edith's contemporary and mentor in St. Ives, used this concept in her painting *Self portrait: still life*, circa 1935, in which she depicts herself as a collection of her favourite objects. Edith Collier's *Interior, St Ives* has haunting qualities evocative of these portraits. Although depicting an unoccupied interior Edith's painting is infused with great presence, the red chair sits empty and poised for an occupant to look out the attic window, the well loved couch is draped with a colourful quilt, while the wood burner waits to be filled.

When Edith returned to New Zealand in 1922 domesticity became her life. In England she could arrange her life to prioritise her art, in New Zealand she assumed her role as eldest daughter and devoted Aunt. Faced with a New Zealand art world hostile to her experimental, modern style and the increasing demands of family life Edith all but gave up painting in the 1940s.

Sarah McClintock
Assistant Curator

Thisbe, Pheasbin and the Tall Tahitians

16 June - 4 November

Taking as its starting point some recent acquisitions that have come into the Sarjeant this exhibition reveals the conversations they have with other works in the Collection.

Toi / Mahara

4 August - 25 November

Bringing together works from the Sarjeant Gallery Collection *Toi / Mahara* examines the role art plays in cultural memory, identity and how it connects us to the past.

Art / Memory

6 October - 25 November

Art / Memory, as a companion show for *Toi / Mahara*, draws from the Sarjeant Gallery Collection to explore the place of memory in European and Pākehā art.

Day to Day Scenes of Domesticity by Edith Collier

15 September - 20 January

This exhibition looks at the influence of domesticity in Edith Collier's art and life and is taken from the Edith Collier Loan Collection and the Sarjeant Gallery Collection.

PAUL KNIGHT: Two small places on opposite coasts (a photographic recollection of 1960s Japan)

29 September - 4 November

To coincide with the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between New Zealand and Japan the Sarjeant Gallery is hosting a small suite of photographs by Levin-based photographer Paul Knight.

COMING UP:

Operation Fizz! A painting expedition by Glenn Burrell

27 October - 24 February

In 2011 Glenn Burrell undertook a three month residency at Tylee Cottage. During that time he began to create a series of objects made entirely from paint, including flippers, skis, gumboots, bicycle componentry and an inflatable boat. All of these objects have been tested by Burrell in the field, with the 'painting expedition' documented with video and photographic footage.

Something in the Water: Wanganui artists from the collection

24 November - 3 March

Wanganui is fortunate to have been home to an extraordinary range of artists working in a broad spectrum of styles and media. This exhibition brings together a selection of fine works from our permanent Collection displaying the best artistic talent to have emerged from the river city.

Old New World Mary Macpherson

8 December - 10 February

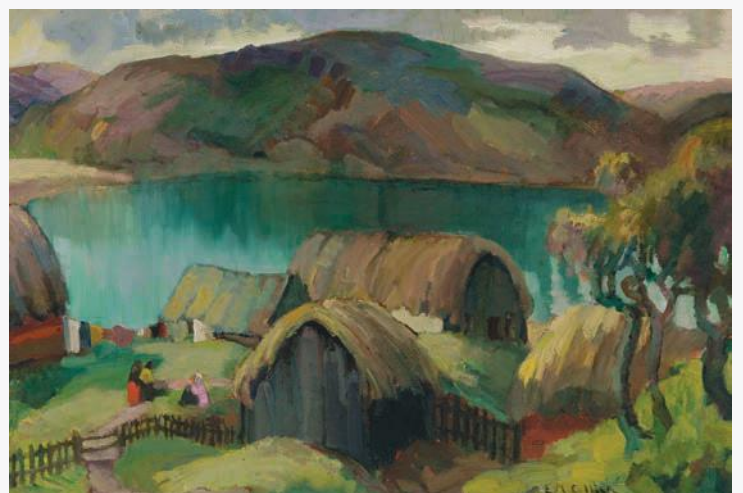
A photographic study of the changing face of small town New Zealand. This exhibition has been curated and toured by Lopdell House Gallery.

At the Quay Gallery

PROFILE: Claudia Borella

21 October - 10 February

A new body of work by Wanganui –based glass artist Claudia Borella. This exhibition has been generously supported by Creative New Zealand.



■ Edith Collier (New Zealand, b.1885, d.1964), *Maketu Pa, Kawhia* circa 1927, oil on canvas. Collection of The Edith Collier Trust, on long term loan to the Sarjeant Gallery Te Whare O Ruhua, Whanganui. 1/29



■ Mary Macpherson, *Queenstown, Otago*, 2010 (sculpture by Robin Coleman)

OLD NEW WORLD

Photographs by Mary Macpherson

8 December - 10 February

Exhibition toured by Lopdell House Gallery