

GALLERY 1
[Trustbank 4]
New Vision

GORDON WALTERS

Te Whiti 1964

Enamel on hardboard

Private Collection, Auckland

Walters' first large-scale koru painting, *Te Whiti* was named after the important spiritual leader Erueti Te Whiti-o-Rongomai III (Te Āti Awa) (d.1907). Walters was in the habit of titling his works after places and Te Whiti is also the name of the street he grew up on in Kilbirnie, Wellington.

Walters held *Te Whiti* back from exhibition and entered it in the 1966 Hay's Prize in Christchurch. The composition refers to *kōwhaiwhai* (painted scroll patterns) and reflects his great admiration for these forms: 'I think that classical Maori art is the highest point of achievement in the arts in New Zealand, I don't think that Europeans have yet done anything to come anywhere near it.'

Yet despite the visual reference, *Te Whiti*, and the works that would follow, never attempted to replicate the customary *kōwhaiwhai* form. Instead, Walters fused these visual elements with his interest in modernist abstraction to create something altogether new. Rather than the koru, he saw the specifically Māori influence in his work as residing in 'the principle of repetition' – the way in which a single form was repeated to make complex and infinitely variable patterns.

GORDON WALTERS
Study for Te Whiti 1956

Gouache and pencil on paper
Private Collection, Auckland

GORDON WALTERS
Black on White 1965

Acrylic and PVA on canvas
Collection of the Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o
Waiwhetu. N Barrett Bequest Collection, purchased 2014.

GORDON WALTERS
Painting No.7 1965

PVA paint on hardboard
Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa
Tongarewa

GORDON WALTERS
Drawing No. 14 1965

Gouache on paper
Private Collection, Auckland

GORDON WALTERS
Painting No. 1 1965

PVA on hardboard
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 1966

GORDON WALTERS
Painting No. 2 1966

PVA on hardboard
The University of Auckland Collection

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled 1966

Gouache on paper

Private Collection, Auckland

GALLERY 2
[Trustbank 1-3]
From Portrait to Poet
Dynamic Foundations
A Continuing Enquiry

GORDON WALTERS

Chrysanthemum 1944

Alkyd (est) on cardboard

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

In 1974, Walters was invited by *Islands: A New Zealand Quarterly of Arts and Letters* to write about a favourite painting and selected *Chrysanthemum*, a work he saw as an important step on his path towards abstraction.

Reflecting on what the work represented, he wrote:

‘When I painted *Chrysanthemum* ... I was struggling to develop a more personal direction in my work than the highly finished realism which had occupied me for the previous three years.’

Sinuuous lines define the stylised form, which is filled with blocks of taupe, acid green and white. Abstracted from nature, the painting shows the influence of both Piet Mondrian and Paul Klee. The painting remained an important one for the artist, who recalled, ‘The sense of freedom and pleasure I felt in painting the picture is still with me.’ It was not exhibited at the time of completion. Walters retained the painting for his own archive and wrote that the work was ‘one of my happiest, and the one which, if I find my efforts flagging, gives me the necessary charge to start again.’

GORDON WALTERS

[Untitled Self-portrait]

Charcoal on paper

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

Waikanae landscape 1944

Conte on paper

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 1991

GORDON WALTERS

[Untitled Photographs]

Gelatin photographic prints

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

GORDON WALTERS

South Canterbury Landscape 1947

Oil on canvas

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

The Poet 1947

Oil and pencil on canvas

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa

Tongarewa

GORDON WALTERS

Study of a rock face 1947

Oil on board

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

GORDON WALTERS

Air Earth 1949

acrylic on canvas

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

Black Figure 1948

Acrylic on cardboard

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

GORDON WALTERS

No.1 1951

Gouache on paper

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled 1955

Oil on canvas

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, gift of the Patrons of the Auckland Art Gallery, 1994

Untitled 1952

oil on canvas

Chartwell Collection, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 1993

Painting No. 2 1953

Oil on canvas

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

When Gordon Walters returned to Melbourne from London in 1951 he began a series of vivid geometric oil paintings that show the direct impact of post-war abstraction. *Untitled*, 1952, and *Painting No 2*, 1953, were inspired by the work of abstractionists Edgard Pilet (1912–1996) and Victor Vasarely, whose paintings Walters saw in Paris. Before this, Walters explored the abstract potential of line in work that remained fundamentally rooted in figuration.

The resolute geometricism of these early paintings – their sense of order and clarity – mark a significant turning point towards pure abstraction. The vertical and horizontal divisions, and the beginnings of a counterpoint between positive and negative space, anticipate some of the discoveries made in gouache in the mid 1950s. Walters refined his handling of black and white and continued working with a reduced palette of strong reds and yellows over the following decades. Later in his career, when Walters felt he had exhausted the *koru*, he looked back on the work of this period for inspiration.

GORDON WALTERS

Study for Blue/Green 1955

Gouache on paper

Collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery

Purchased 1984 with funds from the Dunedin Public Art Gallery Society

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled 17 Mar 1955

Gouache on paper

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 2015

[Untitled abstract] 1954

Gouache on paper

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

Variation 1954

Gouache on paper

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

GORDON WALTERS

clockwise

Untitled (II) 1944

Gouache on paper

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, gift of JB Gibbs Trust, 2015

Untitled 1954

Gouache on paper

Private Collection, Auckland

Airborne Circa 1955

Gouache and pencil on paper

Collection of Dr Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Max Gimblett

Untitled 1955

Gouache on paper

Te Manawa Museums Trust

Untitled (III) 1955

Gouache on paper

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, gift of JB Gibbs Trust, 2015

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled 1955

Oil on muslin on hardboard

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa
Tongarewa

Untitled 1955

Oil on canvas

The University of Auckland Collection

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled 1954

Gouache

Chartwell Collection, Auckland Art Gallery Toi
o Tāmaki, purchased 2015

Untitled 1955

Gouache and pencil on paper

Collection of Richard Killeen and Margreta Chance

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled Circa 1955

Gouache on paper

Private Collection, Sydney

Untitled 1955

Gouache on paper

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 1976

Untitled geometric pattern 1954

Gouache on paper

Collection of the Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu. Gift of the Gordon Walters Estate, 2016

GORDON WALTERS

Polynesian motifs 1955

Gouache on paper

Courtesy of The Fletcher Trust Collection

[Untitled relief print] 1957

Ink on paper

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

GORDON WALTERS

left: **Untitled** 1959

gouache, pencil and watercolour on paper

Collection Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth

right: **Gouache** 1957–58

gouache on paper

Hocken Collections Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago

far right: **Untitled** 1956

gouache on paper

Te Manawa Museums Trust

In the mid 1950s Gordon Walters began a series of paintings that incorporated elements inspired by the Māori art form of *kōwhaiwhai*. *Kōwhaiwhai* designs often appeared on *maumaharatanga* (monuments, cenotaphs, mausoleums), *tahā wai* (calabash water vessels), *hoe* (paddles), *pātaka* (storehouses) and both inside and outside *whare tipuna* (meeting houses). Walters mainly experienced *kōwhaiwhai* through books and by visiting museums, but he also travelled throughout the North Island to see Māori art in museum collections and visit carved and painted meeting houses with his wife Margaret Orbell (1934–2006). Of these experiences, Orbell wrote:

What mattered most to us was seeing the works, encountering their *mana*. And of course this contact with the power of the past changed our sense of the present as well – as did people we met on the way.

Walters' earliest *koru* paintings are small in scale and incorporate a curved *koru*, in contrast with the later more austere forms. Early efforts including *Gouache*, 1957–58, show the placement of a section of *koru*-inspired forms above a field of black space. This split composition echoes the structure of earlier paintings such as *Air Earth*, 1949. This particular composition worked well for the artist, who adapted it using a triangular motif that appears influenced by Pacific forms of pattern-making.

GORDON WALTERS

[Untitled geometric pattern] 1959, 1972

Ink on card

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

GORDON WALTERS

[Untitled geometric pattern] 1967

Gouache on paper

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

Mask No. 1 (1 of two studies) 1962, 1973

Gouache on paper

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled, June 1957 1957

Gouache on paper

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa
Tongarewa

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled (four arm figure) 1960

Gouache on cardboard

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa
Tongarewa

Red figure 1961

Gouache on paper

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa
Tongarewa

GORDON WALTERS
[Preparatory study]

Collage on cardboard
Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection
Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

GORDON WALTERS
Painting No.8 1965

Acrylic on canvas
Collection of Waikato Museum Te Whare Taonga
o Waikato

GORDON WALTERS

Oriental (II) 1967

PVA on hardboard

Courtesy of Geoffrey Ricketts and Sir Christopher Mace

Oriental was first exhibited in 1968 at Walters' second exhibition at the New Vision Gallery in Auckland. There it was surrounded by a number of paintings with no immediate visual connection to Māori art. In the exhibition pamphlet for the show, Walters wrote:

The new paintings continue the exploration of motif begun with the works shown in my previous exhibition. In the present series of paintings there are changes in emphasis. In some, the system of parallel stripes establishes a field for the tension of the repeated motif. In others, the units tend to form a geometric structure. In all of them, feeling alone dictates the placing of the motif. Some of the works depart from the figure-ground ambiguity to present a curved motif which also functions as a module. Here again form becomes meaningful because of repetition, activating the plane of the canvas with a sense of movement.

Named after the curved bay in Wellington Harbour, *Oriental* is based on one of Rolfe Hattaway's pencil sketches in which a rectangular flag shape repeats itself within the image. In the late 1940s, artist Theo Schoon worked briefly at Auckland Mental Hospital, later known as Oakley Hospital, in Auckland. While there, he supplied the patient Hattaway with papers and pencils, and saved many of his drawings, which he later showed to Gordon Walters. In *Oriental*, Walters renders the shapes in crisply defined blocks of black and white, echoing the black rectangle with a smaller white rectangle at the centre of the composition. This mode of repetition became known as the 'en abyme' type, a term that comes from *mise en abyme*, which refers to works that bear *within* themselves a miniature reflection of themselves. Walters later returned to this manner of repetition, producing a large body of purely geometric paintings.

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled II 1975

Gouache on paper

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

[Untitled] 1967

Gouache on paper

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

[Untitled] 1966

gouache on paper

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

GALLERY 3

[Wenita]

A Powerful Economy

Rock Art in Te Waipounamu

THEO SCHOON

Pareora River Birds, Bird Men and Fish

Ink on gelatin photographic print

Chartwell Collection, Auckland Art Gallery Toi
o Tāmaki, purchased 2014

In 1946, Dutch-Indonesian artist Theo Schoon started his project to record Māori rock art in South Canterbury and North Otago for the Department of Internal Affairs. Officially employed to take photographs and make painted copies of the drawings, which were at risk of damage from limestone blasting and proposed hydro-electric schemes, Schoon's fascination with the centuries-old rock art ran deep. His interest in the forms related to his knowledge of the European avant-garde's interest in so called 'primitive art' and informed the direction of his own art practice. His explorations took him to caves and the overhangs of limestone shelters, and he endured harsh physical conditions to record as many drawings as possible. Schoon wrote to his contact William Vance, an historical research officer with the Department of Internal Affairs: 'owing to rain and darkness, I was left at the wrong place, and was forced to sleep in the rain to keep the painting materials dry'. The beauty and mystery of Māori rock art captivated other New Zealand artists, including ARD Fairburn (1904 –1957) and Dennis Knight Turner (1924–2011), as well as Gordon Walters. During the 1940s and '50s, they produced their own creative responses in paintings, photography and prints.

THEO SCHOON

Glennis, Hazelburn, Detail Study

Ink on gelatin photographic print

Chartwell Collection, Auckland Art Gallery Toi
o Tāmaki, purchased 2014

THEO SCHOON

**[Theo Schoon '46 A Recent Discovery
of Incised Figure Resembling Maori
Tattoo in Duntroon]** 1946 (1967)

Ink on gelatin photographic print

Chartwell Collection, Auckland Art Gallery Toi
o Tāmaki, purchased 2014

THEO SCHOON

**[Large Human Figure 'Earthquakes'
Duntroon. One of the most fantastic
places Theo Schoon '47]** 1947

Ink on gelatin photographic print

Chartwell Collection, Auckland Art Gallery Toi
o Tāmaki, purchased 2014

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled 1974

Gouache and acrylic on paper

Chartwell Collection, Auckland Art Gallery Toi
o Tāmaki, purchased 1975

GORDON WALTERS

Parade

Acrylic on canvas

Private Collection

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled 1982

Acrylic on canvas

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 1985

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled 1978

Acrylic on canvas

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled 1956

Gouache on paper

Collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery

Purchased 1984 with funds from the Dunedin Public
Art Gallery Society

GORDON WALTERS

1st study for 'Then' 1955

Gouache on paper

Private Collection, Dunedin

Untitled 1955

Gouache and pencil on paper

Private Collection, Auckland

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled 1955

Gouache on paper

Private Collection

Untitled geometric pattern

Collage

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled 1955

Gouache on paper

Collection of the Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna
o Waiwhetu. Purchased 2015

Untitled (XI) 1955

Gouache and pencil on paper

Collection of Dame Jenny Gibbs

Untitled (XIII) 1955

Gouache on paper

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, gift of JB Gibbs
Trust, 2015

MARTI FRIEDLANDER

[Portrait of Gordon Walters in his studio] Christchurch, 1978

Courtesy of the Friedlander Trust

GORDON WALTERS

Then 1980, Artist's proof 1

Screenprint on paper

Dunedin Public Art Gallery Loan Collection

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

Printmaking played an ongoing role in Walters' art practice, with his first print *Tawa*, 1969, included as part of a portfolio of works by 12 artists published via Barry Lett Galleries. It was through this project that Walters began working with artist Mervyn Williams (b.1940) on the production of his screen prints. This was the beginning of a long association underpinned by Walters' high level of trust in Williams's skill as a master printmaker.

Then was published through Pacific Graphics and, although it was finalised in 1980, the final publication was not completed until 1982. It is one of the few Walters' prints that did not feature a variation of an abstracted koru motif.

GALLERY 4
[McMillan]
Rhythm and Repetition

GORDON WALTERS

Tautahi 1971

PVA and acrylic on canvas

Courtesy of Gow Langsford Gallery

GORDON WALTERS

Tahi 1967

Acrylic and PVA on canvas

The Fletcher Trust Collection, Auckland

GORDON WALTERS

Tiki II 1966

Oil on hardboard

Barry Hopkins Art Trust Courtesy Waikato Museum

Te Whare Taonga o Waikato

GORDON WALTERS

Blue and Yellow 1967

Acrylic on canvas

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, gift of JB Gibbs

Trust, 2015

GORDON WALTERS

Tamatea circa 1969

Acrylic on canvas

Collection Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth

Purchased with the assistance of the Queen Elizabeth II

Arts Council of New Zealand in 1969

GORDON WALTERS
Genealogy II 1967

Acrylic on canvas
Te Manawa Museums Trust

GORDON WALTERS
Genealogy III 1971

Acrylic and PVA on canvas
Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa
Tongarewa

GORDON WALTERS
Genealogy 5 1971

Acrylic on canvas
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, gift of Dame
Jenny Gibbs in honour of Chris Saines, Gallery
Director (1996–2013)

GORDON WALTERS
Black/White 1969

PVA on canvas
Collection of Alan Gibbs

GORDON WALTERS
Black and Red 1970

Acrylic on canvas
BNZ Art Collection

GORDON WALTERS
Untitled 1980

Acrylic on canvas
Collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery
Purchased 1981 with funds from the Dunedin Public
Art Gallery Society

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled 1982

Acrylic on canvas

Private Collection, Auckland

GORDON WALTERS

Waiaata 1971

PVA and acrylic on canvas

Private Collection, Auckland

GORDON WALTERS

Collage 1962

Grey and black paper

Collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery

Purchased 1984 with funds from the Dunedin Public Art Gallery Society

Untitled

Collage

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

Green and Pink 1967

Gouache on paper

Collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery

Given 2016 by the Gordon Walters Estate

Study For Waitara 1959

Ink on paper

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 1983

GORDON WALTERS

Pipitea 1982

Acrylic on canvas

Collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery

Purchased 1984 with funds from the Dunedin Public Art Gallery Society

GORDON WALTERS

Pacific Motifs 1972

Acrylic on canvas

Collection of Dame Jenny Gibbs

Untitled Pacific Pattern 1975

Acrylic on canvas

Private Collection, Auckland

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled 1970

Ink on paper

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, purchased 1983

Marquesan Motif 1968

Gouache/ink on paper

Private Collection, Wellington

GORDON WALTERS

[Untitled] 1970

Ink on paper

Dunedin Public Art Gallery Loan Collection

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

[Untitled] 1966

Ink on paper

Dunedin Public Art Gallery Loan Collection

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

Double Spiral 1963

Gouache on paper

Dunedin Public Art Gallery Loan Collection

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

No. 1 S Curve Spiral 1963

Gouache on paper

Dunedin Public Art Gallery Loan Collection

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled 1970

Gouache on paper

Dunedin Public Art Gallery Loan Collection

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

Untitled 1972

Gouache on paper

Dunedin Public Art Gallery Loan Collection

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

Untitled 1972

Gouache on paper

Dunedin Public Art Gallery Loan Collection

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

GALLERY 5
[Sargood]
Descendants

GORDON WALTERS

Painting J 1974

Acrylic on canvas

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa
Tongarewa

GORDON WALTERS

Painting H 1975

Oil on canvas

Collection Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled 1975

Acrylic on canvas

Chartwell Collection, Auckland Art Gallery Toi
o Tāmaki, purchased 2002

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled

PVA on canvas

Dunedin Public Art Gallery Loan Collection

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled 1989

Acrylic on canvas

Chartwell Collection, Auckland Art Gallery Toi

o Tāmaki, purchased 2011

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled 1986

Acrylic on canvas

Dunedin Public Art Gallery Loan Collection

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

GORDON WALTERS

Rauponga 1986

Acrylic on canvas
Private Collection, Auckland

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled 1991

Acrylic on canvas
Dunedin Public Art Gallery Loan Collection
Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled 1985

PVA acrylic on canvas
Collection of the Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna
o Waiwhetu. Purchased 1987

GORDON WALTERS
Untitled (Triptych) 1993

Acrylic on canvas
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 1994

GORDON WALTERS
Untitled 1986

Acrylic on canvas
The University of Auckland Collection

GORDON WALTERS
Construction with Red Ochre 1985

Acrylic on canvas
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, gift of friends of the
artist on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, 1989

GORDON WALTERS
Four Part Painting 1992

Acrylic on canvas
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, gift of JB Gibbs
Trust, 2015

MARGARET ORBELL
**[Gordon Walters working on Painting
No. 9 (later destroyed)]** Circa 1956

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled, painting 1974

Acrylic on canvas

Private Collection, Auckland

With its severe geometry and reduced palette, *Untitled Painting* is often compared with examples of European and American abstraction. Less apparent is the strong influence of Pacific art, and specifically the illustrations of Marquesan tattoo that Walters researched in early 20th-century ethnographic texts.

Books such as *Tattooing in the Marquesas* (1922) included detailed illustrations of Marquesan facial tattoos, some showing thick horizontal bands of black running across the face, dividing and bisecting parts of it into graphic geometric forms. As translations of a three-dimensional original, these published diagrammatic illustrations drew the attention of Walters in his search for geometric abstraction and became the basis of many experimental works in the 1950s. He circled back and developed these ideas in the 1970s, with compositions such as *Untitled Painting*, 1974, referencing the compositions he had first encountered 20 years earlier.

In the 1960s and '70s, Walters increased the size of his work to more of a 'human' scale. While he continued to make smaller works on canvas, these were often studies towards larger works that the viewer would encounter 'face to face'. In *Untitled Painting*, the scale of the work combines with the facial tattoo pattern to create reference to the body and a sense of monumentality.

GORDON WALTERS

Maho 1973

Acrylic and PVA on canvas

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa
Tongarewa

Partners in scholarship and life, Gordon Walters and Margaret Orbell shared a love of Māori culture that fuelled their separate enquiries across different disciplines over several decades. They met in Auckland in 1961 at the Arch Hill home of the artist Theo Schoon, and in the following year Orbell moved to Wellington to edit *Te Ao Hou*. She recalled the early days of their relationship in Wellington: 'So there we were, a couple of public servants in a public service town that was then very quiet and conservative, showing little interest in any art, Maori or otherwise.'

Maho is arguably Walters' most refined articulation of the koru, and one cannot help but read personal meaning in the painting. The koru more often run horizontally in Walters' painting, the bulbs appearing like waves in a rhythmic tide. In this work they align on the vertical, the two elongated forms interconnecting at the centre of the composition, joined in a harmonious union that might be taken to echo the artist's bond with his wife. Though *Maho* was exhibited in more than one dealer gallery, and there were many interested potential buyers, Walters withdrew it from sale and gifted it to Orbell. A prominent scholar of Māori language, mythology and waiata, Orbell described the meaning of the title, stating: 'It is a poetic word, which can be used in a mystical sense. Here it conveys something of the stillness and calm which this painting communicates.'

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled (XII) 1978-1979

Acrylic on canvas

Collection of Dame Jenny Gibbs

Untitled (XIV) Grey Stripes Abstract 1979

Acrylic on canvas

Collection of Dame Jenny Gibbs

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled diptych 1993

Acrylic on canvas

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection.

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

Untitled

Acrylic on canvas

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection.

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate.

Ochre and White Untitled 1975

Acrylic on canvas

Collection of Dame Jenny Gibbs

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled (X) 1989

Acrylic on canvas

Collection of Dame Jenny Gibbs

Transparency 6 1990

Acrylic on canvas

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection.

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate.

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled 1994

Acrylic on canvas

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection.

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

Transparency XI 1994

Acrylic on canvas

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection.

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate.

Untitled 1994

Acrylic on canvas

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection.

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate.

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled 1989

Acrylic on canvas

Collection of The James Wallace Arts Trust

In the 1980s, Gordon Walters' work reached a new level of refinement in paintings which explore the potential of shapes that overlap each other. Refining the tenor of his painting, brushstrokes became virtually invisible, the colours more subtle and softly muted, and the surfaces rendered with total precision. Some of the interconnecting forms recall pieces of cellophane and create the illusion of transparency. However, perhaps the most profound formal relationships occurred in the 'en abyme' paintings in which an image is mirrored within itself. This kind of enigmatic repetition was inspired by the drawings of Rolfe Hattaway, a patient at Auckland Mental Hospital. Walters was in the habit of returning to his 'back catalogue' of early studies and source material for inspiration, and many of the ideas for these late works are nascent in the 1950s gouache paintings and in his memories of Hattaway's sketches

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled 1976

Gouache

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection.

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate.

Untitled 1987

Gouache

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection.

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate.

Transparency 1 1988

Gouache

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection.

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate

Untitled 1988

Gouache

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection.

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate.

GORDON WALTERS

Untitled Koru

Acrylic on canvas

Dunedin Public Art Gallery loan collection.

Courtesy of the Gordon Walters Estate.

Gordon Walters was working on *Untitled* ('The Last Koru') up to two weeks before his death in November of 1995. It is a work that moves back and forth across his oeuvre, from *Painting No 2*, 1966, which pushes its koru to the top and bottom of a rectangular format, to *Maho*, 1973, a large canvas that pulls its koru into the centre. In a spirit of reconciliation, 'The Last Koru' refines the structural oppositions established in the artist's studies of the 1950s: black/white, symmetry/asymmetry, figure/ground, positive/negative, horizontal/vertical can all be traced through to this final painting.

With a late release of fresh energy, Walters created an image in which his fundamental forms of bar and circle stand alone as spare figures in opposition across a white expanse, as if in colloquy or debate. Here the koru returns with utmost simplicity and acuity, a final summation and refinement of a motif the artist had laboured with over a painting career of four decades. This painting's very lightness set about defying death and is proof of the success of Walters' artistic project, which he described succinctly as: 'I want to say something very simple that keeps on working'.