

LOUISE HENDERSON (1902–1994)

New Zealand, France

Samoan Woman in Yellow 1954

oil on canvas

AUCKLAND ART GALLERY TOI O TĀMAKI
PURCHASED 2005

Louise Henderson applied her cubist aesthetic to a range of female subjects – contemporary figures, the classical nude, and Māori and Polynesian women, clothing them in cubist costumes to assert their power and modernity. In *Samoan Woman in Yellow*, 1954 she uses a defined network of geometric triangular and trapezoid shapes in different shades to construct the yellow jewel-like gown. Henderson's painting is less to do with an analysis of the body and surrounding space than it is an interplay between sharp lines and planes and soft curves in the glamorous reclining figure.

LOUISE HENDERSON (1902–1994)
New Zealand, France

House in Dieppe 1957

oil on canvas

THE WALLACE ARTS TRUST
GIFT OF THE RUTHERFORD TRUST

LOUISE HENDERSON (1902–1994)

New Zealand, France

The Skaters 1951

tempera on board

ON LOAN FROM THE GOW FAMILY COLLECTION

The Skaters, 1951 was painted before Louise Henderson returned to train in Paris in 1952. It reveals the influence of John Weeks, who provided Henderson with most of her cubist understanding during the late 1940s. The painting is constructed on a grid of small squares which Henderson filled with different shades of orange and blue. A cluster of faces, drawn in pencil, emerge through the field of these softly coloured squares, and the figures' bodies merge with the surrounding space. Exhibited in a Thornhill Group exhibition organised by Helen Hitchings in the early 1950s, the painting was described in a review at the time as bringing 'experimenting into focus'.

LOUISE HENDERSON (1902–1994)

New Zealand, France

Still Life 1953

oil on canvas on board

HOCKEN COLLECTIONS UARE TAOKA O HĀKENA
UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO, DUNEDIN

LOUISE HENDERSON (1902–1994)

New Zealand, France

Still Life 1958

gouache and crayon on hardboard

HOCKEN COLLECTIONS UARE TAOKA O HĀKENA

UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO, DUNEDIN

WILFRED STANLEY WALLIS (1891–1957)

New Zealand

Abstracted Landscape c1950

oil on board

AUCKLAND ART GALLERY TOI O TĀMAKI
PURCHASED 1974

In *Abstracted Landscape*, c1950 Wilfred Stanley Wallis swaps the straight black lines of *Road at Rotoiti*, c1950 for a series of smooth curves, which sweep up the composition, merging areas of cool tones with sections of heavily abstracted forest. Although this painting uses sinuous rather than straight lines, it is constructed using the same underlying framework as *Road at Rotoiti*. In both paintings the subject is deconstructed into a series of geometric forms which Wallis sets in a flattened pictorial space. The resulting landscape appears unfixed, mobile and active. According to his friend Melvin Day, the fact that Wallis was 'questioning the fundamentals of composition and colour, and the imposition of an order on his art', made him 'one of the underrated progenitors of abstract art in New Zealand'.

COLIN McCAHON (1919–1987)

New Zealand

Titirangi 1956–7

oil on hardboard

ON LOAN FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION, AUCKLAND

Colin McCahon combined cubistic techniques with elements from the local landscape: the kauri trees surrounding his house and the bay at the end of his road in Titirangi. His Cubism was strongly rooted in his local situation. The West Auckland landscape was a recurring motif, and his cubist works concerned with this convey a strong sense of the environment outside his home. In his cubist-inspired paintings, kauri appear to dissolve; foliage opens and flows into surrounding space; grids and lines flatten and dissect the earth, sea and sky.

COLIN McCAHON (1919–1987)

New Zealand

Titirangi 1956–7

oil on canvas on board

AUCKLAND ART GALLERY TOI O TĀMAKI
GIFT OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE,
WELLINGTON, 2002

The silhouette of the distant hills is formed by a series of cone shapes which are just visible through the mass of fluttering diamonds and squares. Colin McCahon called this style of painting his 'little squares technique', and it developed during a period when he became intensely focused on the experience of vision and the effects of light on the landscape. When the painting was exhibited in McCahon's first solo exhibition at a dealer gallery he wrote to his friend John Caselberg and described the works as 'a big advance (and apparently almost unintelligible to most people)'.

COLIN McCAHON (1919–1987)

New Zealand

French Bay 1956

enamel on board

ON LOAN FROM THE FLETCHER TRUST

COLIN McCAHON (1919–1987)

New Zealand

I am 1954

oil on hessian

HOCKEN COLLECTIONS UARE TAOKA O HĀKENA
UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO, DUNEDIN

In Paris, Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso lifted text from printed advertisements, newspapers and posters and scattered them across the fractured surfaces of their paintings. Colin McCahon was also interested in painting text, but he deployed arguably more personally meaningful statements. *I am*, 1954 communicates a faith-based message with distorted and intentionally non-perspectival letters which fill the frame. Although the words feel solid and weighty, the longer you look at the painting the more its visual ambiguities appear.

COLIN McCAHON (1919–1987)

New Zealand

Manukau 3 1954

oil on paper on hardboard

HOCKEN COLLECTIONS UARE TAOKA O HĀKENA
UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO, DUNEDIN

Dinghies and yachts swing on their moorings as a small plane flies through slashing vertical lines that cut across the view of Manukau Harbour. Like other New Zealanders, Colin McCahon gained a new perspective on the countryside with the introduction of domestic flights, which began operating in 1947, and he depicted planes in a number of works during the 1950s. A sense of the local and personal was a strong feature of McCahon's home-grown Cubism. *Manukau 3*, 1954 includes small boats, one of which may be the dinghy he mentioned in a letter to his friend, the writer John Caselberg:

Have just acquired a 12ft dinghy. Have been rushing home to get it painted & have worked on it all today & yesterday with a friend – the launching next weekend. It's magnificent to be a boat owner – only we can't really afford it – are still building onto the house & doing alterations.

JOHN WEEKS (1886–1965)

New Zealand, United Kingdom

Study for Composition 1929

oil on canvas

AUCKLAND ART GALLERY TOI O TĀMAKI
PURCHASED WITH THE AID OF A GRANT FROM
THE QUEEN ELIZABETH II ARTS COUNCIL OF
NEW ZEALAND, 1970

Study for Composition, 1929 is the first significant engagement with Cubism by a New Zealand artist. John Weeks did not look to the complex Cubism of Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso; instead, he trained at Académie Lhote on the rue d'Odessa in Montparnasse, Paris. There he learned about pictorial construction, and how to bring structure and balance to his painting using a geometric framework and the Golden Section. Weeks' Cubism is aligned with the more traditional faction of 'Salon' Cubists which included Jean Metzinger (1883–1956), Albert Gleizes (1881–1953), Fernand Léger (1881–1955), Robert Delaunay (1885–1941), Juan Gris (1887–1927) and others. Lhote, who academicised the movement, taught hundreds of foreigners and promoted ideas of order in composition. He told his students to 'work by the geometry, the numbers. Work with your intellect more and let your eyes have a holiday.'

JOHN WEEKS (1886–1965)

New Zealand, United Kingdom

Industry 1936

oil on board

AUCKLAND ART GALLERY TOI O TĀMAKI
PURCHASED 1938

Among a mass of abstract forms, two workers pour liquid metal from a large pot. This crowded arrangement of objects and space conveys the heat and intensity of a foundry. *Industry*, 1936, with its mix of abstract and representational elements, suggests the influence of Frenchman André Lhote. Lhote promoted a constructive approach to painting in which the subject was reduced and abstract elements of line, shape and colour built up into a harmonious design. Lhote's Cubism was informed by the post-war 'return to order'. He stated:

You must be classic. Put yourself before the model in a workmanlike spirit. See nothing in the nude, but straight lines, the angles, the curves, the tones cold and warm, the large, small and medium-sized dimensions etc. And when you have done this for a whole week, you find you have made a form which resembles a nude, the resemblance is the recompense of the seventh day.

MELVIN DAY (1923–2016)

New Zealand

***Boats in Wellington Harbour* 1951**

oil on board

AUCKLAND ART GALLERY TOI O TĀMAKI
PURCHASED 2001

In this modern depiction of the capital's port, thick black lines demarcate the strongly geometricised shapes, creating a heavy armature which echoes the sturdy industrial subjects of cranes and chimneys. Melvin Day completed *Boats Wellington Harbour, 1951* after he had returned from his first visit to Europe. The restricted palette and repetition of forms shows Day's understanding of Cubism's Analytic phase, while the mathematically precise diagonals and careful pictorial construction have their genesis in New Zealander John Weeks' teaching on the Golden Section's ancient mathematical proportions. Painting the city in a cubist-inspired manner Day links modernist style and industrial progress.

LOUISE HENDERSON (1902–1994)

New Zealand, France

Duravel No 2 1952

oil on canvas

AUCKLAND ART GALLERY TOI O TĀMAKI
PURCHASED 1954

Churches, alleyways and buildings fold in on each other in layered translucent planes created by the complex network of lines. The transparency given to solid objects and buildings enhances the spatial ambiguity of the composition, while the austere monochromatic tones recall the palette of the early Analytic cubist paintings of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque.

Duravel No. 2, 1952 is based on drawings Louise Henderson made while staying in the historic village of the same name in Southern France. She recorded in her journal that she found it beautiful and made 'at least a dozen pictures at first sight . . . Later I had a vision of my big landscape Duravel. I get to it and finish the drawing without trouble and draw it on canvas ready to paint.'

COLIN McCAHON (1919–1987)

New Zealand

House in trees, Titirangi 1953

oil on cardboard

AUCKLAND ART GALLERY TOI O TĀMAKI

GIFT OF UNA PLATTS, 2003

After moving to Auckland in 1953, Colin McCahon's focus shifted from the expansive southern landscapes of his previous home to his immediate domestic environment in Titirangi, and his painting style turned to the 'strictly formal structure' of Cubism. In this early painting of Titirangi, McCahon adapts different cubist strategies: geometricising, simplifying and flattening form while retaining a sense of perspective.

The pitched roof of a small house is just visible through the dense undergrowth and a stand of young kauri trees. The kauri tree became one of McCahon's key subjects in the period, and like Robert Delaunay's cubist paintings of the Eiffel Tower, the tall young natives convey a kind of optimism and monumentality. McCahon's friend, *Landfall* founder and editor Charles Brasch, noted the kauri in a 1955 letter:

Spent today with the McCahons at Titirangi; we sat on the beach before lunch while the children bathed, then all afternoon till dusk on their terrace platform that seems suspended amidst the forest, the slender kauris with their light spring green rising from the leafage below & soaring high above . . .

COLIN McCAHON (1919–1987)

New Zealand

Kauri 1953

oil on board

AUCKLAND ART GALLERY TOI O TĀMAKI
BEQUEST OF MISS L D GILMOUR, 1990

In his own version of Georges Braque's early Analytic Cubism, which ran for four years from 1908 to 1912, Colin McCahon incorporates the oval structure and monochromatic palette with more primary compositional elements. Here, contours are left open or undefined so that they merge into the space surrounding them, creating a new pictorial dynamic and great visual ambiguity. Also known as 'Domestic Landscape', *Kauri*, 1953 shows McCahon's interest in Braque's revolutionary thoughts on space:

There is in nature a tactile space, I might almost say a manual space . . . This is the space that fascinated me so much, because that is what early Cubist painting was, a research into space.

CHARLES TOLE (1903–1988)

New Zealand

Landscape with Stonecrusher 1970

oil on hardboard

AUCKLAND ART GALLERY TOI O TĀMAKI
COLLECTION OF THE MUSEUM OF NEW ZEALAND
TE PAPA TONGAREWA

Charles Tole's representation of local vernacular architecture has been viewed in the context of a growing desire to assert a distinctive national culture. However, it can also be understood as part of the artist's interest in international art and the sharpness and clarity of American Precisionist painting. Tole wrote that he and his brother: 'have both been intensely interested in modern developments, both in style and technique, yet we think these should not be arbitrarily or consciously striven for but should emerge and flow from the subject matter'. In *Landscape with Stonecrusher*, 1970 the simple and strong massing of forms evokes the straightforward design of the industrial building.

COLIN McCAHON (1919–1987)

New Zealand

Kauri 1954

oil on board

HOCKEN COLLECTIONS UARE TAOKA O HĀKENA
UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO, DUNEDIN

In *Kauri*, 1954 Colin McCahon daringly recasts the Cubists' oval composition to depict a kauri forest – more than 30 years after it was first used by Georges Braque. McCahon revealed awareness of the tensions and pressure of working in a style no longer considered avant-garde when he recalled his time with Australian painter Mary Cockburn-Mercer, describing her as: 'a Cubist, perhaps out of date in the context of the Melbourne modernism of 1951, [but] . . . above all a painter of great integrity.' *Kauri* was first exhibited alongside the work of other pioneering abstract painters John Weeks and Louise Henderson in the 1954 landmark exhibition *Object and Image*, and like much of the painting in the exhibition, it had its genesis in Cubism. In 1954 McCahon wrote about *Object and Image* to his friend, the poet John Caselberg:

At work – a show of non-representational painting – from Auckland painters – it's really surprisingly good. Not causing the stir I thought it would – so either people no longer notice new things – or these are no longer new – the latter is really the truth. From this lot I feel more strongly than ever the need for greater layers of meaning than one finds – as we have talked about.

COLIN McCAHON (1919–1987)

New Zealand

Kauri Forest 1955

oil on hessian

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON ART COLLECTION
PURCHASED 1967

In a review of Louise Henderson's 1953 solo exhibition at the Auckland Art Gallery Colin McCahon explains his interest in Cubism:

. . . process is nearly always one of building up from parts to make a whole . . . the depicting of space and objects in space is no longer tied to the brief Renaissance heresy of lines running back from the picture frame, but is freed from these ties to reach out in all directions from the painted surface of the picture.

By the mid-1950s, McCahon was using cubist pictorial strategies and the distortion of forms for greater expressive effect. Rhythmic energy springs from *Kauri Forest*, 1955 as small square patches of white and green pulse across the surface at different angles.

COLIN McCAHON (1919–1987)

New Zealand

French Bay 1957

oil on canvas on board

CHARTWELL COLLECTION

AUCKLAND ART GALLERY TOI O TĀMAKI

PURCHASED 1984

On a trip to Melbourne in 1951 Colin McCahon spent time with Australian painter Mary Cockburn-Mercer, who had worked as an assistant in André Lhote's academy in Paris. McCahon recalled her influence, identifying the belief in 'the need for precision and the freedom that only exists in relation to a strictly formal structure'.

In 1953 McCahon was commissioned by Tasman Empire Airways Limited to commemorate an event known as the Last Great Air Race from London to Christchurch. The finished painting, *International Air Race, 1953* (which no longer exists) took an aerial perspective on the landscape. McCahon adopts this aerial perspective again in *French Bay, 1957*. Here, the underlying shape of the bay remains visible through the vortex of radiating squares, which burst from the centre of the composition.

COLIN McCAHON (1919–1987)

New Zealand

French Bay 1956

oil on canvas on board

COLLECTION OF THE MUSEUM OF NEW ZEALAND

TE PAPA TONGAREWA

GIFT OF THE FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL ART GALLERY, 1985

Before Cubism the 'grid' played a subordinate role in painting – a hidden framework, it functioned as something to depart from or build on, rather than a subject in itself. By 1956 Colin McCahon's local landscape painting had become a geometrised network of compressed rectangles maintained through series of neat vertical and horizontal lines, which flow into one another through the occasional diagonal break. In *French Bay*, 1956 land is represented by brown blocks at the bottom of the composition, above which are stacked sections of sea and sky. American Cubist Stuart Davis noted:

Cubism is the bridge from precept to concept. A cubist picture is a concept in light and weight of a specific objects in nature. It is from that only a step to the expression of concept of diverse phenomena, sound, touch, light, etc., in a single plastic unit.

LOUISE HENDERSON (1902–1994)

New Zealand, France

Houses in Dieppe 1958

oil on canvas

AUCKLAND ART GALLERY TOI O TĀMAKI
PURCHASED 1991

Throughout the 1950s Louise Henderson's painting became more abstract as she increasingly concentrated on the spatial relationships between planes of pure colour. Reviewing the Auckland painting scene in a 1959, I V Porsolt wrote that Henderson, and British painter Michael Nicholson, 'represent the urbane extreme in Auckland painting'. Henderson simplified the landscape to such a degree in *Houses in Dieppe*, 1958 that it seems as if there is no need for the subject. Formal issues, including shape and colour, have become the theme of the painting.

LOUISE HENDERSON (1902–1994)

New Zealand, France

Amman No. 4 1956

oil on canvas

ON LOAN FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION

Amman No. 4, 1956 is one in a series of architectural abstractions Louise Henderson made while she was based in the Middle East from 1956 to 1958. Rendered in a palette of soft blues and white, the Jordanian capital becomes a series of subtle openings, levels and spaces, which convey a kind of simultaneity or shifting perspective on the townscape. Although it is highly abstract, this painting is anchored in reality and based on a series of more realistic drawings.

LOUISE HENDERSON (1902–1994)
New Zealand, France

Untitled (Jerusalem Series) c1957

oil on board

COLLECTION OF THE MUSEUM OF NEW ZEALAND
TE PAPA TONGAREWA

In this carefully engineered painting of Jerusalem, buildings are simplified to flat blocks of colour, mirrored against each other to reinforce balance, and interconnected by thick white lines which meander through the composition, unifying the heavily abstracted architectural forms. Writing about Henderson's work in the late 1950s, Auckland architect and critic I V Porsolt concluded that the impact of her paintings 'comes entirely from compositional, architectural values, which definitely include colour values and textural quality'. Works like *Untitled (Jerusalem Series)*, c1957 signify Henderson's high degree of experimentation during this period, as she began to employ increasingly broad generalisations of form and non-imitative use of colour.

LOUISE HENDERSON (1902–1994)

New Zealand, France

Dieppe 1959

oil on canvas

ON LOAN FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION

By the late 1950s Louise Henderson was ready to undertake some of her most ambitious experiments in composition. Continuing with the architecture theme, in this painting she abstracts the historic coastal town of Dieppe to produce a decidedly modern image comprising flat, geometric blocks of colour. *Dieppe*, 1959 evinces Henderson's familiarity with Bauhaus art and design, and the colourful geometric paintings of French Abstraction-Création artist Auguste Herbin.

LOUISE HENDERSON (1902–1994)

New Zealand, France

Amman 1956

oil on canvas

ON LOAN FROM THE FLETCHER TRUST

LOUISE HENDERSON (1902–1994)

New Zealand, France

Two Women 1953

oil on stretched canvas

ON LOAN FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION

Two Women, 1953 conveys a sense of harmony and repose through equivalences of light and shadow. Sections that appear solid balance against darker passages of intersecting angles, and the subjects take on a structural quality. As a modern artist, Louise Henderson was also interested in the practices and traditions of art history, which were important motivating factors in the development of new styles. Painted in a modern cubist manner, *Two Women* has a historical legacy recalling the two women motif of Leonardo da Vinci's *The Virgin and Child with St. Anne*, c1503 (Louvre Museum). A modern woman in life and art, Henderson left her family for a period to extend her education in Europe. *Two Women* was included in her exhibition at Auckland Art Gallery in 1953 – the first solo exhibition afforded to a local living artist.

LOUISE HENDERSON (1902–1994)

New Zealand, France

Reclining Woman 1955

oil on stretched canvas

ON LOAN FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION

CHARLES TOLE (1903–1988)

New Zealand

Quarry Buildings 1967

oil on board

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON ART COLLECTION
PURCHASED 1967

Charles Tole's *Quarry Buildings*, 1967 reveals the legacy of John Weeks, who played a critical role in the transmission of progressive ideas about art to New Zealand. Weeks provided a counter approach to the conservative naturalism which prevailed at Auckland's Elam School of Art, where he taught for more than 20 years. He taught outside the walls of Elam, too, sharing knowledge with a community of mature artists including those in the Thornhill Group, to which Charles Tole and Louise Henderson belonged. John Weeks shared his modern and democratic beliefs in a 1949 article:

That fine art has been segregated far too much from the general pattern of life to be healthy, and has, in consequence, been placed on a pedestal for the benefit of the few rather than being the accepted and natural heritage of everyone.

WILFRED STANLEY WALLIS (1891–1957)

New Zealand

Road at Rotoiti c1950

oil on board

THE ILENE AND LAURENCE DAKIN BEQUEST
AUCKLAND ART GALLERY TOI O TĀMAKI
PURCHASED 2012

One of Rotorua-based Dr Wilfred Stanley Wallis's favourite subjects was the volcanic valley of Waimangu. He painted this subject throughout the 1940s and 50s in a series in which the landscape is increasingly abstracted. A close friend of John Weeks, Wallis combined the senior artist's teachings of the Golden Section and colour orchestration with his own views on art. When Melvin Day met Wallis in 1945 he recalled that the artist was already moving away from the faithful reproduction of what lay before the eye, and was starting to explore more personal modes of representation informed by his personality and state of mind. In this lively image of the local landscape Wallis uses dark jagged lines and triangular forms, finding a rural equivalent to modern urban dynamism in the landscape of Rotorua.

JOHN WEEKS (1886–1965)

New Zealand, United Kingdom

Abstract Forms, Venice c1951

tempera on board

AUCKLAND ART GALLERY TOI O TĀMAKI
PURCHASED WITH THE AID OF A GRANT FROM
THE QUEEN ELIZABETH II ARTS COUNCIL OF
NEW ZEALAND, 1970

In 1949 a fire destroyed John Weeks' studio. Hundreds of paintings destined to be shown in his retrospective exhibition were lost. In a letter to Louise Henderson, Weeks wrote:

Although I now realise that I have lost the best part of a lifetimes work . . . it is no use sitting down and moaning about it which serves no useful purpose. The only sane thing to do is to try to rebuild on the ashes – to attempt to achieve something that will at least equal – if not surpass past efforts, and to humbly accept the hand of fate . . . I am much too interested in the many problems still unsolved and feel that I shall be forced to continue in spite of every setback . . .

What was not lost were Weeks' sketches and source materials for paintings that he has created on his travels in Europe and North Africa 20 years earlier. In *Abstract Forms, Venice, 1951* dramatic contrasts of forms, multiple viewpoints, and strong primary and secondary colours reflect the painter's interest in the colourful semi-abstract paintings of Fernand Léger.

LOUISE HENDERSON (1902–1994)

New Zealand, France

Glass and Fruit 1954

oil on board

COLLECTION WAIKATO MUSEUM TE WHARE TAONGA O WAIKATO

This painting was first shown at Auckland Art Gallery in 1955 in the *Unit Two* exhibition, where it hung alongside abstract paintings by Michael Nicholson, Colin McCahon, Kase Jackson and Gabrielle Hope. Still-life painting, while considered a relatively neutral genre for formal experimentation, was favoured by Henderson and was the subject of continual refinement in her practice. In this work she balances tertiary colours of soft pinks and greens with domestic objects including the arum lily – a symbol of purity.

LOUISE HENDERSON (1902–1994)

New Zealand, France

Still Life with Glass 1951

gouache and black pen on paper

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON ART COLLECTION
PURCHASED 1958

Created before her training in Paris, *Still Life with Glass*, 1951 demonstrates how far the influence of John Weeks took Louise Henderson. In a tightly composed still life, Henderson creates pictorial depth and interest by combining aspects of transparency and opacity. Harmony is achieved through the balancing of sinuous lines on either side of the composition, and through the limited use of colour. The textured surface, a hallmark of Synthetic Cubism, and the use of signs and fragments of collaged elements were introduced into the still-life painting of Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso in 1912. This work was included in the Thornhill Group exhibition which was shown in Auckland and at the Gallery of Helen Hitchings in Wellington in 1951.

WILFRED STANLEY WALLIS (1891–1957)

New Zealand

Colour Arrangement with Mandolin c1951

oil on board

AUCKLAND ART GALLERY TOI O TĀMAKI
PURCHASED 1974

The subject and composition of *Colour Arrangement with Mandolin*, c1951 may on one hand reflect Wilfred Stanley Wallis's growing awareness of European Cubism, but the pastel pinks and blues also recall house paint colours popular in 1950s New Zealand. A bold and experimental artist who came late to painting, Wallis made work that is characterised by a preference for black, which he used to create dramatic contrasts and to heighten the effect of particular forms. *Colour Arrangement with Mandolin* sets ubiquitous cubist still-life subjects – mandolin, grapes and bottle – in shallow space while crudely fracturing them to heighten the pictorial drama.

WILFRED STANLEY WALLIS (1891–1957)

New Zealand

Abstract Composition Derived from X-Ray Plates c1957

oil on board

AUCKLAND ART GALLERY TOI O TĀMAKI
PURCHASED 2004

Working at the periphery of the New Zealand art scene in Rotorua, the largely self-taught artist Wilfred Stanley Wallis, an orthopaedic surgeon by profession, was a progressive and experimental artist. John Weeks, a friend and mentor to Wallis, believed that his isolation and 'lack of knowledge' worked in his favour as he 'developed his own technique' – one which was bold in colour and composition. Here, the artist abstracts x-rays, which were an inspirational invention for their ability to penetrate the surface and present the underlying structure of the human form.

The emergence of tools in Melvin Day and Wallis's paintings, like John Weeks' depictions of industrial architecture, reflects a thoughtful engagement with modern subject matter. Cubist paintings of tools and medical equipment not only reflect the modern objects they had at hand at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, they also echo Cubism's penetration beneath the surface and focus on internal construction.

JOHN WEEKS (1886–1965)

New Zealand, United Kingdom

***Still Life with Fruit and Decorated Jar* c1940**

tempera on board

AUCKLAND ART GALLERY TOI O TĀMAKI
PURCHASED WITH THE AID OF A GRANT FROM THE
QUEEN ELIZABETH II ARTS COUNCIL OF
NEW ZEALAND, 1970

Still Life with Fruit and Decorated Jar, c1940 has its genesis in John Weeks' classical, decorative and orderly form of Cubism. Weeks' belief that 'the ideal to work for is noble design, which implies mass arrangement, with rhythm, incorporated with fine colour orchestration and great draughtsmanship' echoes ideas that stemmed from Cubism and were popular in the 1920s and 30s. Australian artist Frank Hinder, who worked at the same time as Weeks, reiterated these sentiments when he stated:

No matter what lay in front of one, it was the relationship expressed which was important, and the relationship was expressed through design – the orderly expression of an idea.

JOHN WEEKS (1886–1965)
New Zealand, United Kingdom

***Still Life with Yellow Jug* c1940**

oil on wood

COLLECTION OF THE DUNEDIN PUBLIC ART GALLERY
PURCHASED 1970 WITH FUNDS FROM THE
QUEEN ELIZABETH II ARTS COUNCIL OF
NEW ZEALAND

Nothing has been left to chance in John Weeks' carefully composed *Still Life with Yellow Jug*, c1940. Small sections of pattern; the blue zig-zag at the neck of the jug; the textured wall paper; and flecked grey curtain create interest and detail and contrast the flat blocks of colour. Weeks favoured concepts of design and ideas of construction, abstract harmony, and the classical spirit which resulted in his work being labelled 'decorative', a term that has negative connotations due to its association with crafts such as ceramics, glass, costume and interior design. For the influential English artist and critic Roger Fry, the decorative – work that was 'flat, stylised, anti-naturalistic, synthetic' – was something to strive for.

MELVIN DAY (1923–2016)

New Zealand

***Maori Meeting* c1949**

tempera on card

AUCKLAND ART GALLERY TOI O TĀMAKI

GIFT OF THE ARTIST, 2015

Principles of the Golden Section merge with Māori tukutuku panels like those found in whareniui (meeting houses) in this dynamic and angular cross-cultural painting. The colour and composition, with its strong diagonals and black lines, closely resembles Melvin Day's later work *Boats in Wellington Harbour*, 1951, which hangs nearby. *Maori Meeting*, c1949 was painted when Day lived in Rotorua during a period in which he shared a studio with Wilfred Stanley Wallis. Day worked as a school teacher at Ngongotaha in the Rotorua area, and in addition to this painting he created a number of more conventional portraits of Māori during the same period.

MELVIN DAY (1923–2016)

New Zealand

***Still Life with Scottish Thistle* 1955**

oil on board

AUCKLAND ART GALLERY TOI O TĀMAKI

GIFT OF THE ARTIST, 2015

The Scottish thistle plant, with its strong spiky leaves, proved to have an angularity and sharpened form which was suitable to utilise in this lively still life. In earlier still lifes Day placed musical instruments in the paintings as signifiers of Cubism. These objects carried connotations of newness and avant-gardism. While *Still life with Scottish Thistle*, 1955 may not be cubist in a narrow sense, the flattened, geometric and fragmented forms, and the exclusion of illusions of three-dimensional depth are hallmarks of Cubism.

MELVIN DAY (1923–2016)

New Zealand

***Still Life with Protea and Red Jug* 1951**

oil on card

PRIVATE COLLECTION, WELLINGTON

MELVIN DAY (1923–2016)

New Zealand

***Still Life* c1950**

oil on cardboard

PRIVATE COLLECTION, WELLINGTON

LOUISE HENDERSON (1902–1994)

New Zealand, France

Still Life with Compotier 1953

gouache and crayon on paper

HOCKEN COLLECTIONS UARE TAOKA O HĀKENA
UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO, DUNEDIN

French artist Paul Cézanne severed the still life's connection to daily life with the creation of arrangements which were artificial in their manner, and which appeared to be composed specifically for the purpose of being painted. In Louise Henderson's carefully staged *Still Life with Compotier*, 1953 sections of light and shadow create new forms and an extra layer of complexity to the subtle interplay of coloured shapes and surface texture. Henderson reflected on this period, describing how she was 'trying to discover a more absolute construction and the ultimate simplification of all relationships'.

CHARLES TOLE (1903–1988)

New Zealand

***Decoration 3* 1971**

oil on board

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND ART COLLECTION

COLIN McCAHON (1919–1987)

New Zealand

I and Thou 1954–1955

oil on hardboard

AUCKLAND ART GALLERY TOI O TĀMAKI
BEQUEST OF MISS L D GILMOUR, 1990

In *I and Thou*, 1954–5 Colin McCahon uses text – a cubist technique – to express ideas related to art and his own personal faith. The solid three-dimensional letters thrust forward from a field of faceted forms, reinforcing the prophetic statement McCahon borrowed from philosopher Martin Buber's book *Ich-Du (I and Thou)*. In the book Buber proposes that humanity will always find its ultimate meaning from mutual relationships between two beings, including between an individual and god. An 'I and Thou' relationship involves encounter, dialogue and exchange, and could be seen to reflect McCahon's ongoing concern about the relationship between the object and image.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]