



COLIN McCAHON

[1919-1987 Aotearoa New Zealand]

North Otago landscape 2 1967

PVA paint on hardboard

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, purchased 1969 from Wellington City Council Picture Purchase Fund. Courtesy of the Colin McCahon Research and Publication Trust.

McCahon's family connections to the region saw him travel frequently to Oamaru and its surrounding landscapes. North Otago emerged strongly as subject in the mid-1960s when McCahon was working from the distance of Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. In 1966 he embarked on a series of paintings and prints that depicted severe and abstracted views of the region, drawing heavily on his memories of the land and a series of return visits around that time. He presents the landscape as simplified bands of colour – driven by a desire to highlight enduring relationships with the land and its emotional and spiritual weight. In October 1967, exhibiting the *North Otago* series at Barry Lett Gallery, Auckland, McCahon wrote of the series:

In painting this landscape I am not trying to show any simple likeness to a specific place. These paintings are most certainly about my long love affair with North Otago as a unique and lonely place, they are also about where I am now and where I have been since the time when I was in standards four and five at primary school and living in North Otago. These paintings stand now as part of a search begun in Dunedin, continued in Oamaru and developed by the processes of normal erosion since then. The real subject is buried in the works themselves and needs no intellectual striving to be revealed – perhaps they are just North Otago landscapes.⁴

4. Quoted from Barry Lett exhibition catalogue, in Bloem, Maria and Martin Browne, *A Question of Faith*. Craig Potton Publishing / Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (2002). p. 208