

FIONA CONNOR

Untitled (mural design)

April 28 – May 27 2012

Aaron Kreisler and Fiona Connor

May 29 – June 17 2012

Michael Parr and Blaine Western

June 19 – July 15 2012

Adam Elliott, Spencer Hall,
Clarke Hegan, Jed McCammon,
Sam Oram, Phoebe Thompson,
and Hamish Wadworth

July 26 – August 19 2012

Saskia Leek and Nick Austin

A Dunedin Public Art Gallery Visiting Artist's project supported by
Creative New Zealand Toi Aotearoa and the Chartwell Trust

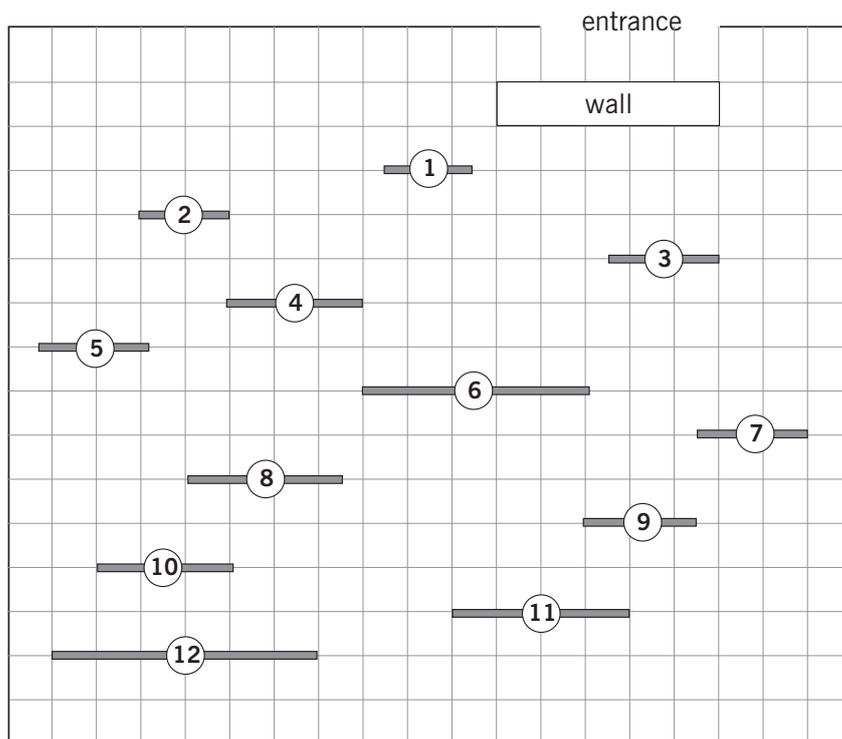
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ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND TOI AOTEAROA



FIONA CONNOR

Untitled (mural design)

This is the second component of Connor's eight-week artist residency, and it sees the reformulation of an existing exhibition. *Colourbox*, the original exhibition, comprised a number of late twentieth century New Zealand abstract expressionist, colour field, and neo-expressionist paintings from the Gallery's holdings. *Untitled (mural design)* utilizes this preceding structure, the collection show, as raw data for rethinking the relationship between exhibition design, didactic information and even the function/augmentation of the artwork. Connor's 'resolved' Visiting Artist Programme exhibition is in many respects about intervening in and testing the Gallery's role in generating and facilitating 'art experiences'. The most strident aspect of *Untitled (mural design)* is the manufacturing of a portable hanging system, this allows for the removal of the paintings from the walls and their rehangng as freestanding and moveable screens.



1. COLIN McCAHON
Helensville 3 1971 gouache on paper
2. ALAN PEARSON
In Between Life and Death 1978/79 oil on canvas
3. MILAN MRKUSICH
Painting No.9 1961 oil on canvas
4. PAT HANLY
Ecstasy Condition, Passion 1975 oil on hardboard
5. PHILIP CLAIRMONT
Don't Look c.1973 oil and acrylic on jute canvas
6. TOSS WOOLLASTON
Wellington 1972 oil on board
7. GRETCHEN ALBRECHT
Cushioned Fall 1973 acrylic on canvas
8. JULIAN DASHPER
Rural Sheraton 1984 oil and acrylic on canvas
9. JEFFREY HARRIS
Untitled 1984 oil on canvas
10. DAVID ARMITAGE
The Wrestlers 1967 oil on canvas
11. PHILIP TRUSTTUM
Untitled 1963 oil on hardboard
12. JUDY MILLAR
Working the Green 2003 oil on canvas

Artists Michael Parr and Blaine Western are the second team selected by the Dunedin Public Art Gallery's Visiting Artist in Residence Fiona Connor to re-arrange the exhibition titled *Colourbox*.

Originally curated by Aaron Kreisler, Connor, who is interested in the way art is interpreted and presented by galleries, chose to reconfigure Kreisler's exhibition, re-presenting the works as free standing objects on purpose built frames. She and Kreisler, then rearranged the display of the works within the space to create a new experience and interpretation of it.

Integral to the project's concept, was Connor's desire to have other interpreters be invited to re-arrange the work over the coming months. These re-configurations, from a totally different perspective than her own, would thus offer a series of responses and readings and offer opportunities for on-going exhibition and curatorial dialogue, in addition to an unfurling set of experiences for all of the Gallery's audiences – including artists, curators and the viewing public.

Michael Parr and Blaine Western have provided the following statement with regard to the current layout:

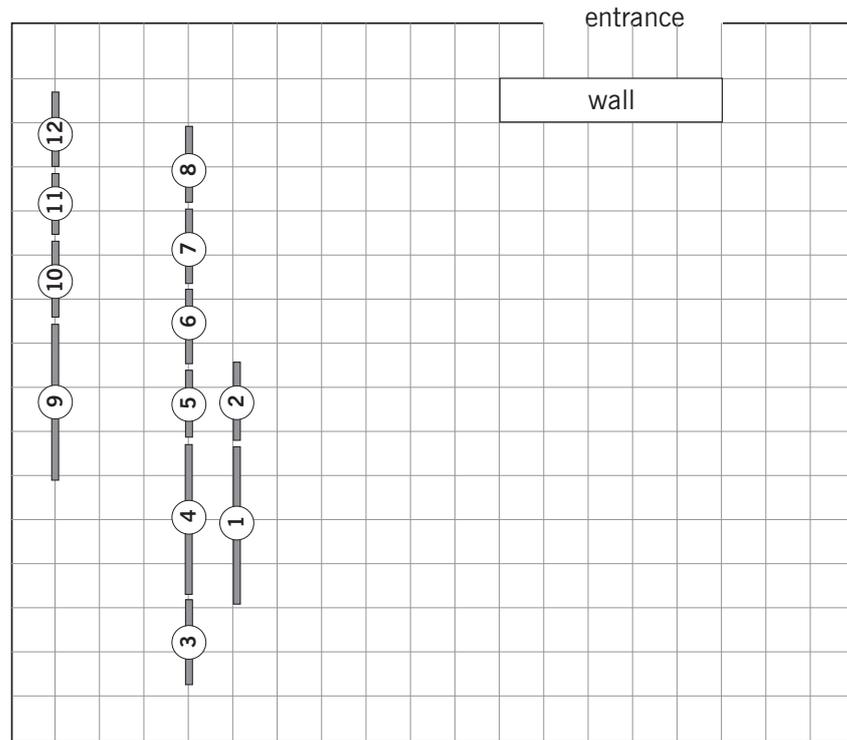
'Our primary response to the installation was to subtract the singularity of the works, which was a strong feature of the first arrangement of this exhibition. In that arrangement, Fiona Connor decided to represent the paintings as objects, by taking them from the walls and hanging them on purpose built metal stands. She and the Gallery's curator, Aaron Kreisler, then arranged the paintings, now objects on stands, organising them into rows of works in the centre of the gallery space. The paintings all faced the end wall, meaning that the backs of the works confronted viewers upon entering the exhibition.'

This current new interpretation, takes the denial of the painted surface even further. Both Parr and Western have a professional knowledge and interest in architecture and so in their reformulation of the show, wanted to 'negotiate the limits and relationships between art, and the experience of architecture'.

For them *Untitled (mural design)* became about transforming a particular display by pushing the paintings and structures to the edges of the room, establishing a notional wall 'perimeter' subtly defined by two layers of satin paint. They wanted to compress the works in the space, as a response to Fiona's titling of the show, and notions of the exhibition as a 'mural'.

The Gallery's Conservator requested that the paintings were arranged in rough isles side by side. To protect them while they were being handled and moved, the artworks were also draped with recently purchased and refurbished ex-hospital Alisco sheets. As Parr and Western note in this regard:

'The effect of the sheets over the images was stimulating to us in the way it transformed the works from paintings into formal structures. The arrangement and covering of the paintings on their new metal frames, augmented beneath the white, folded and creased geometries of the sheets, combined with the refraction of the gallery light on the newly painted wall surface, became for us, the 'mural design' conceived and generated from two separate but mutually informed logics.'



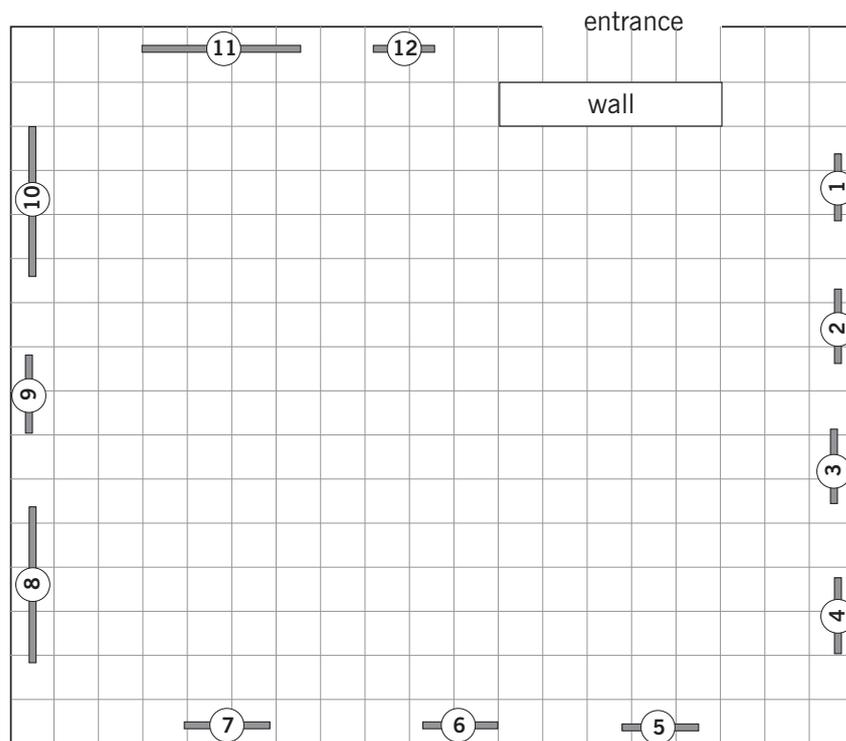
1. TOSS WOOLLASTON
Wellington 1972 oil on board
2. GRETCHEN ALBRECHT
Cushioned Fall 1973 acrylic on canvas
3. JEFFREY HARRIS
Untitled 1984 oil on canvas
4. PHILIP TRUSTTUM
Untitled 1963 oil on hardboard
5. MILAN MRKUSICH
Painting No.9 1961 oil on canvas
6. JULIAN DASHPER
Rural Sheraton 1984 oil and acrylic on canvas
7. PAT HANLY
Ecstasy Condition, Passion 1975 oil on hardboard
8. ALAN PEARSON
In Between Life and Death 1978/79 oil on canvas
9. JUDY MILLAR
Working the Green 2003 oil on canvas
10. DAVID ARMITAGE
The Wrestlers 1967 oil on canvas
11. COLIN McCAHON
Helensville 3 1971 gouache on paper
12. PHILIP CLAIRMONT
Don't Look c.1973 oil and acrylic on jute canvas

As a group we started working with Fiona Connor, at the beginning of her artist in residency in Dunedin, through an artist generated initiative to work with her in an 'open' studio programme. This saw us take part in a series of seven two hour group critique sessions of our individual practice at Connor's *Fruit and Small Sculpture* premises. The results of the gatherings have been archived, alongside other materials generated in that space, in the *Fruit and Small Sculpture Lending Library* which is located on the landing in the Gallery foyer.

For this reformulation of *Untitled (mural design)* our group has sought to simultaneously reference different aspects of previous versions of this exhibition. Firstly, the layout for *Colourbox* has once more become the blueprint for our analysis of this project. However, in reconsidering this exhibition we have also reflected on the relationship between the original hang (directly on the walls) and the shifting functions of the frames/stands created by Connor.

In an attempt to focus on the frames/stands as sculptural objects, it was determined that seven paintings should be removed and lit in the places where the Michael Parr and Blaine Western had directly intervened in the room. Where the artist's (Parr and Western) had continued to allow traces (nails in the wall) from *Colourbox* to be present, we decided it was appropriate to re-hang the remaining works from this original exhibition.

In conjunction with this, we interpreted the covered paintings from Parr and Western's re-organisation as a signal for packing down the exhibition, suggesting a shift in focus from the paintings to a unified object. In that version of *Untitled (mural design)* the paintings became a unified field, a mural that had been metaphorically and visually whited-out. By separating them again we have sought to refocus discussions around the integrity of the stands as sculptural forms. Thus drawing attention to the experience of both the painting and its surrogate (Connor's frame/stand/hanging system), as being an integral continuum through all the iterations of *Untitled (mural design)*.



1. metal frame for MILAN MRKUSICH
Painting No.9 1961 oil on canvas
2. metal frame for PAT HANLY
Ecstasy Condition, Passion 1975 oil on hardboard
3. metal frame for PHILIP CLAIRMONT
Don't Look c.1973 oil and acrylic on jute canvas
4. metal frame for ALAN PEARSON
In Between Life and Death 1978/79 oil on canvas
5. metal frame for DAVID ARMITAGE
The Wrestlers 1967 oil on canvas
6. metal frame for JULIAN DASHPER
Rural Sheraton 1984 oil and acrylic on canvas
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Helensville 3 1971 gouache on paper

Artist couple Nick Austin and Saskia Leek were approached to do the final version of *Untitled (mural design)* for a number of reasons: they are relatively recent arrivals to Dunedin who are or have been invited into this community as visiting artists (Nick is currently the Frances Hodgkins Fellow and Saskia was part of this Gallery's Visiting Artist Programme in 2000), they have close ties as artists and friends with Fiona Connor, and they both utilise paint in their practice.

This final point is important, because as this exhibition has developed it has become increasingly evident that each 'take' has reflected the underlying artistic interests of each group. So with this in mind, we (Fiona Connor and Aaron Kreisler) sought an approach that would in many respects rethink this project as an exercise and exploration of painting.

Nick Austin and Saskia Leek have provided the following statement for this layout:

'On being invited to design the last installment of this exhibition our first thought was of the inscription on the back of the Toss Woollaston painting revealed by Kreisler and Connor's initial rehang of the *Colourbox* show. The exchange between the artist and his dealer Peter McLeavey is a rare insight to the community aspect of art making largely invisible to the ordinary viewer. The spheres of influence and exchange reflected in Connor's show are the everyday of artists' lives.

The sculptural element created by the custom-made stands also had the effect of making the paintings feel like figures, as if the artists themselves were standing in the room. Looking around we thought about the wider circle the work implied, the significant public relationships the artists had with other peers as friends, lovers, associates and teachers. The stands also brought to mind the kinds of historical Art Society exhibitions where individual works were framed in a less rarified manner than we are used to in galleries today. Instead of individual works being viewed in isolation these Society exhibitions offered a mode of engagement where relationships were drawn between artists as they bumped up alongside one another. As we set up our part of the show we enjoyed the 'views through' that the screens created. These different aspects seemed to make a community more tangible.

Our response to Connor's exhibition is gestural in its spirit. The selection of new work in the show is not meant to be exhaustive. Rather, it is based on our knowledge of the relationships between these artists, how this feeds into the holdings at Dunedin Public Art Gallery, and shaped within a limited timeframe and level of access. This is clearly two artists response to another artist's 'open' proposition, but it has been coordinated within a clearly defined set of parameters – utilising personnel, reading materials and artworks provided by the Gallery. We hope that audiences will appreciate this as an opportunity to see fundamental and chance connections, between the paintings that we have brought into communication with the preexisting works from *Untitled (mural design)*.'

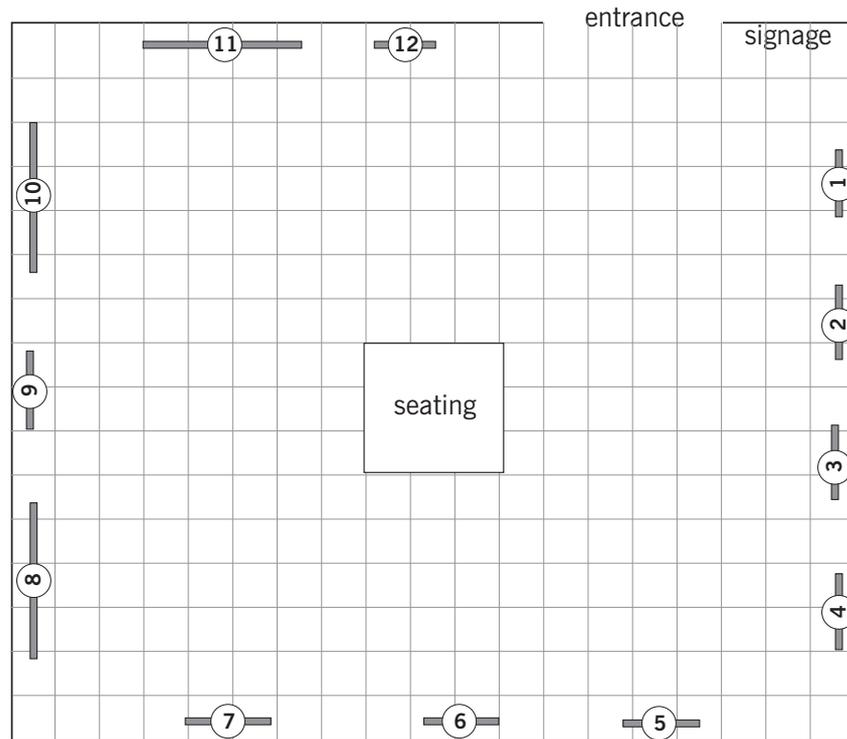
13. DON PEEBLES
Untitled 1976 acrylic on wood
14. QUENTIN MACFARLANE
Slow Drift c.1966-67 oil on canvas
15. JOHN COLEY
Abacus (Colour Grid) IX 1970 oil on canvas
16. TOM FIELD
Pool Series No 3 1978 oil on hardboard
17. DON DRIVER
Relief VI 1975 mixed media
18. JOHN REYNOLDS
Or in the Heart - or in the Head 1988 oil pastel, acrylic on wood
19. JOANNA PAUL
Window, Beta Street 1980 pencil on paper
20. CLAUDIA POND EYLEY
Earth Shield 1984 acrylic and photo silkscreen in collage on canvas
21. MARIE SHANNON
St Patrick's Day Manicure; The Wearing of the Green 1986
black and white photograph
22. ROBERT JESSON
Kiefer Steps 1985 fibreglass roplex and clay
23. PAULINE THOMPSON
Detail No.7 1966 oil on canvas
24. TONY FOMISON
Dying Beggar By Ceruti 1970-71 oil on hessian
25. JAMES ROSS
Portrait of G 1978 oil on hardboard
26. MARIA OLSEN
Rim (3) 1989 acrylic medium and pigment on gesso on muslin
on polystyrene
27. WILLIAM SUTTON
Landscape Elements XII 1972 acrylic on board
28. RUDI GOPAS
Oaro 1965 PVA on board

COL OUR BOX

This is an exhibition that pays homage to the rise of neo-expressionism in New Zealand painting from the mid to late twentieth century. *Colourbox* is a collection based exhibition that focuses on an area of practice that has largely gone under the radar in recent years in terms of its aesthetic and conceptual values.

Colourbox includes some artists that have not been on display at the Gallery for a number of years including Philip Trusttum, Pat Hanly, Alan Pearson and David Armitage. These artists have been placed alongside peers such as Gretchen Albrecht, Milan Mrkusich and Jeffrey Harris, and a subsequent generation of contemporary painters, including Julian Dashper and Judy Millar, who clearly still revel in this form of art making.

Colourbox is an unashamedly vibrant and fantastical celebration of expressive painting in all its guises. And in this context the words of the late Philip Clairmont are worth noting: "I think that paint itself is a magical substance. The act of remaking or transforming an object is magic."



1. MILAN MRKUSICH
Painting No.9 1961 oil on canvas
2. PAT HANLY
Ecstasy Condition, Passion 1975 oil on hardboard
3. PHILIP CLAIRMONT
Don't Look c.1973 oil and acrylic on jute canvas
4. ALAN PEARSON
In Between Life and Death 1978/79 oil on canvas
5. DAVID ARMITAGE
The Wrestlers 1967 oil on canvas
6. JULIAN DASHPER
Rural Sheraton 1984 oil and acrylic on canvas
7. JEFFREY HARRIS
Untitled 1984 oil on canvas
8. JUDY MILLAR
Working the Green 2003 oil on canvas
9. GRETCHEN ALBRECHT
Cushioned Fall 1973 acrylic on canvas
10. PHILIP TRUSTTUM
Untitled 1963 oil on hardboard
11. TOSS WOOLLASTON
Wellington 1972 oil on board
12. COLIN McCAHON
Helensville 3 1971 gouache on paper

TOSS WOOLLASTON

1910 - 1998 New Zealand

Wellington 1972

oil on board

Collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

Gifted 2002 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade.

'This painting was commissioned by me in 1970. The artist painted a number of preliminary [sic] watercolours and drawings during 1970/1971. The painting was worked at from then, considerable editing and shaping was done and the work was declared finished by M T Woollaston February 1972.'¹ Peter McLeavey, the influential Wellington art dealer, inscribed these words on the back of this work as a record of his major role in pushing Woollaston to produce larger, and in turn grander paintings. As the artist noted in correspondence during this period: 'I[t] feels more like labour than inspiration as yet... What is he trying to do to me? Make me conform to modern standard sizes? Release my potential? Anyway, it might be an interesting experiment.'²

Indeed this 'interesting experiment' was rewarding for Woollaston on many levels. The works were snapped up by collectors, received positive reviews and importantly saw the creation of a number of his most significant landscape paintings. *Wellington* is a captivating depiction of this harbour city; it is at once a majestic panorama that stretches out in front of the viewer, and at the same time a frenetic swirl of painterly gestures and moments of intimacy. This is an artist at one with a place he lives and breaths. It is Wellington stripped bare, bruised and blunted by its common foe the wind, which emits such a powerful force that it seems to shake the land to its very geological core.

1. Peter McLeavey, 4th April 1973.

2. Toss Woollaston correspondence to Faye Hill, 28 January 1971, cited in *Toss Woollaston: A Life in Letters*, ed. Jill Trevelyan, p. 350.

GRETCHEN ALBRECHT

b 1943 New Zealand

Cushioned Fall 1973

Acrylic on canvas

Collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Purchased 1973 with funds from the Dunedin Public Art Gallery Society.

Cushioned Fall hails from a period when Gretchen Albrecht struck out in a new artistic direction. Leaving behind her early forays in painterly figuration, she started producing large, immersive and vibrantly coloured abstractions. As the artist noted at the time: 'I am primarily concerned with creating images with a certain presence through the interaction and gradation of colour. By developing a staining technique with washes of colour laid down in broad areas on unprimed canvas, I draw together the elements of sky, cloud, land and sea.'¹

While a sense of landscape is inherent in this series of paintings, Albrecht is more interested in the essence and wonderment of its fundamentals than an 'actualized' place. In this respect, the process of painting becomes an essential ingredient in the articulation of this idea; gravitation largely determines the direction and shape of each colour application, and chance plays an important hand in how the diluted acrylic both sinks into the canvas and creates an edge.

1. Barry Lett Galleries, invite for *Gretchen Albrecht*, Auckland Festival Exhibition 1974.

JEFFREY HARRIS

b 1949 New Zealand

Untitled 1984

oil on canvas

Collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

Gifted 2011 by Kobi Bosshard.

PHILIP TRUSTTUM

b 1940 New Zealand

Untitled 1963

oil on hardboard

Collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Purchased 1984 with funds from the Dunedin Public Art Gallery Society.

This ambitious diptych comes from Philip Trusttum's final year of painting at Ilam School of Art, University of Canterbury. Trusttum was a prodigy of Rudolf Gopas, the charismatic and strident Eastern European painting lecturer, who brought with him a set of attitudes, connections and ideologies, which set him apart from the largely English born and trained staff at Canterbury.

Gopas was a polemic figure, whose confrontational and no-nonsense approach students tended to either survive or thrive under. From the evidence of *Untitled: Panel 1 & Panel 2*, Trusttum found this blowtorch environment deeply rewarding, as this is a painting whose scale, application and sheer gall is the embodiment of youthful confidence. Under Gopas' watch, Trusttum was able to tap into a lineage of abstraction whose roots clearly connected him back to such luminaries as Kandinsky.

MILAN MRKUSICH

b 1925 New Zealand

Painting No.9 1961

oil on canvas

Collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Purchased 1973 with funds from the Dunedin Public Art Gallery Society and the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand.

A pioneer of abstract art in New Zealand, Mrkusich began painting in 1946. His work has gone through a number of stylistic shifts over the years and yet always retained a strong commitment to a non-objective idiom. The smallest and oldest painting in the room is possibly the best place to begin viewing *Colourbox*, because Mrkusich's *Painting No.9* is far from being a diminutive or quaint art experience. There is an intensity to this painting, which is easily as captivating as Judy Millar's *Working the Green* - the most recent and largest work in the show.

JULIAN DASHPER

1960 - 2009 New Zealand

Rural Sheraton 1984

oil and acrylic on canvas

Jim Barr and Mary Barr loan collection, Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

Produced in a period when the debate around the development of a New Zealand style, and whether or not that style subscribed to a national (provincial), or international discourse, had well and truly started to ebb, this painting presents an interesting set of propositions. For all intents and purposes, at a surface level, *Rural Sheraton* looks and signifies (particularly through its title) that it is part of a regionalist school of painting; and yet this work pays homage to the return of large and audacious painting internationally in this period. So while there is a provisional relationship with place, it is as much about the idea, memory and experience of being present, as capturing a sense of the local. And there is even a deceptive use of art history, as stylistic approaches and theoretical connections are appropriated for their effect by the artist rather than for any underlying meaning.

PAT HANLY

1932 - 2004 New Zealand

Ecstasy Condition, Passion 1975

oil on hardboard

Collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Purchased 1976 with funds from the Dunedin Public Art Gallery Society.

The status of contemporary painting and in particular its social, critical and economic worth, has largely stayed the course for over a century in New Zealand. However, cracks started appearing in its guise from the late sixties, as artists started finding more immediate and potent forms of expression in post-object sculpture, performance and time-based media.

For painters such as Pat Hanly who, by the mid-seventies represented the new-old guard, this increasingly divergent art scene provide significant license to explore new artistic terrain. While still working in the idiom of painting, *Ecstasy Condition, Passion* reflects an increasing attempt by Hanly to rethink the approach, and by extension the audience's understandings, of his 'type' of art. A richly diverse series the *Condition* paintings reflect an artist trying to fix a range of emotional and psychological states. But as reviewer Denys Trussell, writing in the *City News*, commented, there is an inherent dilemma in this form of practice: 'To paint one's "condition" or interior landscape of emotion is ultimately an impossible task, for it amounts to an attempt to arrest within the frame of a painting, and with the material medium of paint, something that is immaterial and incessantly changing.'¹

1. Denys Trussell, *City News*, cited in *Hanly: A New Zealand Artist*, Russell Haley, p. 194.

ALAN PEARSON

b 1929 New Zealand / England

In Between Life and Death 1978-1979

oil on canvas

Collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Purchased 1979
with funds from the Dunedin Public Art Gallery Society.

JUDY MILLAR

b 1957 New Zealand

Working the green 2003

oil on canvas

Collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Purchased 2003 with funds from the Dunedin Public Art Gallery Society and with the assistance of the artist and Gow Langsford Gallery Ltd.

DAVID ARMITAGE

b 1943 New Zealand

The Wrestlers 1967

oil on canvas

Collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Purchased 1974
with funds from the Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

COLIN MCCAHERN

1919 - 1987 New Zealand

Helensville 3 1971

gouache on paper

Collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

Bequeathed 1971 by Mrs Gerald Lindo Ferguson.

The late sixties to the early seventies came to be a defining period in the illustrious career of Colin McCahon. Firstly, he finally set-up a studio, at Murawai in Auckland, which provided him with an environment where he was unencumbered by a sense of physical limitations (he had space to paint in, rather than within); and where he had psychological and geographical distance from the distractions of city living. He also gave up his lecturing post at the University of Auckland School of Fine Arts to take up painting full-time.

“... From my studio at the south end of Murawai Beach the beach and sand bar that fronts the Tasman Sea extends 48 miles to the Kaipara harbour mouth. This is the sand dune and lake area of Waioneke. Kaipara Flats are north of Helensville. This is a shockingly beautiful area. North again from Kaipara Flats a dry and north Otago-like area happens. I do not recommend any of this landscape as a tourist resort. It is wild and beautiful; empty and utterly beautiful. This is, after all, the coast the Maori souls pass over on their way from life to death - to Spirits Bay ‘carrying their fronds and branches’. ... The light and sunsets there are appropriately magnificent.”¹

This artist statement, which reveals McCahon in a state of unbridled exaltation, accompanied the exhibition, *McCahon: Days and nights; Helensville; Poems of Kaipara Flat; Kaipara Flat: Written; Necessary protection*, at Dawson’s Gallery, Dunedin, in 1971. While *Helensville 3* did not appear in this exhibition, a number of paintings from this series, which burn with uncharacteristically lurid palette, did come to this city.

1. Colin McCahon, cited in *Colin McCahon: Artist*, Gordon H. Brown, p. 109.

PHILIP CLAIMONT

1949 - 1984 New Zealand

Don't Look c.1973

oil and acrylic on jute canvas

Collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Purchased 1981
with funds from the Dunedin Public Art Gallery Society.