



# WATERCOLOUR NEW ZEALAND Inc.



Winner of the Winsor & Newton NZ Summer Watercolour Competition 2020

*Barbara in her Summer Garden*

by Jan Alldritt-Miller

## Newsletter 179 March – May 2020

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## From the Committee

We hope that you've managed to get some painting done over the busy Summer holiday season.

Our members submitted 48 paintings to our first Summer in New Zealand Competition, sponsored by Winsor & Newton. The three prizewinning paintings, along with a number of highly commended works, are featured later in the newsletter.

Congratulations are due to Jacky Pearson who has had a four page article, *Colour in All its Forms*, published in the latest issue, No 37, of the prestigious international magazine *The Art of Watercolour*. Jacky conducts regular workshops for Watercolour New Zealand and has contributed a number of articles to our newsletter.

Watercolour New Zealand patron Adrienne Pavelka, along with Richard Bolton, Svetlana Orinko, Jacky Pearson and Dianne Taylor will be featured in the Watercolour Society of Western Australia's International Watercolour Exhibition which takes place in Fremantle from 13 March to 13 April this year. There are a number of activities associated with the show including a celebration dinner, painting demonstrations, workshops (some of them free) and plein air painting opportunities. If you're interested in attending this exhibition further information is available on the society's website, [www.watercolourswa.org.au](http://www.watercolourswa.org.au).

Our Watercolour New Zealand Autumn Paintaway to Methven takes place from Friday 8 May to Wednesday 13 May. Painters of all levels, from beginners to professional artists, attend our Paintaways. New painters will be supported by experienced artists and partners and non-painters are welcome. Paintaways are popular and enjoyable events, well worth considering if you haven't previously taken part in one. For further information, email [bookings@watercolournewzealand.nz](mailto:bookings@watercolournewzealand.nz), subject line: Paintaway Methven.

The Watercolour New Zealand AGM takes place at the Karori Arts and Craft Centre, Beauchamp St, Karori on Sunday 8 March at 2pm. We are always looking for new committee members and hope to elect a new president and vice presidents in the following month. Our current membership stands at over 450 and we are dependent on volunteers for all of our activities. We'd love to see you at the AGM.

Committee, Watercolour New Zealand Inc.

### Welcome to our new members

Erika Josa, Wellington  
Shona Mclean, Nelson  
Marilyn Moran, Wellington  
Fleur Cameron, Wellington  
Danielle Gallo, Wellington  
Rosie Griffiths, Auckland  
Alyson Howell, Wellington  
Jean Main, Blenheim  
Jenny Dovey, Blenheim  
Evelyn Simmons, Blenheim  
Szczepan Urbanowicz, Australia  
Val Donkervoort, Wanganui  
Paul Terpstra, Wellington

## Creating Beautiful Greys

Watercolour is the perfect medium for creating subtle and varied greys/ neutrals that provide a supportive backdrop to points of vibrant colour. I asked two of our respected artists for their advice on creating beautiful greys.

### Adrienne Pavelka

When Sue Wild requested a "greys" theme for an article in the Newsletter, after agreeing, I realised that I don't actually deliberately mix greys – they just happen when you blend and add colour on to wet paint.

Black, Payne's Grey and Yellow Ochre, often used to make grey, are pigments that, in my very humble opinion, should be given an indecent burial, if not flushed away.

We are all familiar with "mud" – something that happens when you have mixed colours together trying to create a grey and have over-worked a muddy puddle. Hint: drop in a blob of opaque cobalt lavender, turquoise or orange to give your puddle a "ping".

Rocky outcrops, stone walls, shingle river braids, weathered fence posts and foggy skies are not grey. They are a rainbow of colours if you look closely with just a little imagination! In my little example of a rock or stone wall, I have virtually slopped on a wash of Dragon's Blood, Cobalt Blue and Purple in patches and let the colours merge, then defined the shapes with a hard pencil and finally glazed more unmixed colour onto damp paint where drying "cauliflowers" add to the rock texture. Otago schist stone also has its own colour scheme of Golden Lake and Purple.

For a wet west coast misty sky and trees, I would use Cobalt Blue and Raw Umber. For warm fog, Dragon's Blood (Brown Madder) and Cobalt Blue. A wash of Indigo for a cool grey also works.

I do hope that there will be a great gathering at the Watercolour New Zealand Paintaway in Methven in May.



## WATERCOLOUR NEW ZEALAND

National society for watercolour artists

**President:** Pending appointment

**Vice President:** Sue Wild [info@watercolournewzealand.nz](mailto:info@watercolournewzealand.nz) 04 5267304

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**Treasurer:** Jill Hartstonge [jillhartstonge@xtra.co.nz](mailto:jillhartstonge@xtra.co.nz) 04 5676938

### We welcome new members

**Annual subscription: Member: \$40 Couple: \$50 Student (enrolled): \$15**

Membership includes our quarterly newsletter, workshops, social activities, exhibition, discounts at art stores.

To join please go to [www.watercolournewzealand.nz](http://www.watercolournewzealand.nz) – Membership page. Complete the online form. Alternatively, post your cheque with name, address, phone numbers and email on the reverse side to: Membership, Watercolour New Zealand, PO Box 33088, Petone, Lower Hutt 5046.

Watercolour New Zealand Bank Account: 01-0607-0026637-00

To be listed in the Artist Directory on our website: go to [www.watercolournewzealand.nz](http://www.watercolournewzealand.nz) – Membership – Join Directory – select a profile type. Set-up cost is \$10, \$25 or \$50. Then contact the Treasurer (above).

### Your newsletter contribution is welcome

This newsletter aims to inform and encourage members by including articles on all facets of the art of watercolour. Your contributions and suggestions will be welcomed.

Please email the editor – see above.

## Our next Paintaway

### AUTUMN PAINTAWAY TO METHVEN

Friday 8 May – Wednesday 13 May 2020

You are invited to join a Watercolour New Zealand Paintaway to Methven. We'll have a long weekend to paint, enjoy the scenery and each other's company. Paintaways are for everyone.

New painters will be supported by experienced painters. Non-painters are welcome.

Come and make new friends.

Methven is a small town on the western edge of the Canterbury plains. There are views to the mountains – we hope with a touch of snow.

For further information email:

[bookings@watercolournewzealand.nz](mailto:bookings@watercolournewzealand.nz)

Subject line: Paintaway Methven

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Amanda Brett

To be truthful, for me, grey is the most frightening colour – I don't wear grey, I don't like looking at it, I don't have it in my house and I hate grey cloudy days! So when I was told recently that my "greys" were greatly admired I was quite floored, this started a renewed process of investigation – what greys do I create and how do I use them?

Firstly, many of the pigments are made from natural minerals and due to these natural qualities, react and bounce off each other, quite fun to watch and experiment with. Manufactured blacks and greys are mostly made from a kiln firing process therefore they contain soot. For large washes they can be lifeless and dull and often dry substantially lighter than expected.

Secondly, in watercolour, our staples are our complementaries (red vs green, purple vs yellow etc). For example, to neutralise red, I add a little green, a secondary colour containing blue and yellow, when I add green to red I have 3 primaries which means the greying process is started.

I prefer to paint with transparent watercolours so I select my palette carefully. Mostly I use Winsor & Newton pigments and then I add opaque pigments for accents.

My favourite palette includes Winsor Blue (red shade), Permanent Alizarin Crimson and Burnt Sienna. Sometimes I swap the blue for Winsor Blue (green) or French Ultramarine and Alizarin for Permanent Rose or another transparent "pink" like Permanent Magenta. I choose this palette because each of these colours have good tinting strength in their own right. Therefore this palette, with just enough water to mix, will make an exciting and fresh dark and, with diluting, will create fantastic luminous greys. I start by making a violet, for shadow areas a cool violet (i.e. less red, more blue) and then I add Burnt Sienna.

► Auckland Viaduct, en plein air. Warm silver greys with Cerulean Blue and Burnt Sienna. Accents of Cerulean Blue, white gouache and Cadmium Orange.



▲ Auckland Viaduct studio. Winsor Blue (red shade), Permanent Alizarin Crimson and Burnt Sienna. Accents of Raw Sienna, Cobalt Turquoise and white gouache.



▲ Granger's Point, Auckland NZ, en plein air. Winsor Blue, Cobalt Turquoise and Raw Sienna. Accents Cobalt Turquoise, Transparent Orange, Raw Sienna.

► Blacksand II, Raglan NZ, en plein air. French Ultramarine and Burnt Sienna.



▲ Light Work, Tamaki River NZ, en plein air. Winsor Blue (red shade), Burnt Sienna and Permanent Alizarin Crimson. Accents Cadmium Red and white gouache.



For silvery greys try Cobalt Blue and Permanent Alizarin for a gorgeous violet then add just a wee touch of Raw Sienna or try Winsor Green and Permanent Alizarin or Rose. Cerulean Blue or Cobalt Blue plus Burnt Sienna. For darker greys try French Ultramarine or Indigo with Burnt Sienna. As you can see the sky is the limit but of course it depends on the pigments in your palette. It's a matter of experimentation.

To start with, I mix light value greys in my palette but I make sure I can still see little pockets of the ingredient colours. In other words, sloppy, inefficient colour mixing is best because it ensures there is no over-mixing. After washing in a light value grey around whites, I mix a stronger grey using the same pigments but in different ratios so that for example I wash a warm grey over a cool grey. I then select one of my accent colours and charge it in and then spatter some of the other colours while it's still damp.

For me watercolour is about poetry, creating beauty and light and life. As Delacroix said 'Colour is the fruit of life' and developing a repertoire of greys will enhance your colour work.

## "Go to nature for instruction" The advice that guided Nugent Welch

by Claire Clark

As I look at the blue sky above Titahi Bay I see 'Nugent' clouds. I look along the headlands and see the light that Nugent painted playing on the cliffs. Nugent knew how to both simplify and to enthrall with his compositions. He was at one with nature. That Nugent



*West Coast, Wellington c. 1949* by Nugent Welch, Accession no. 69/48 Collection Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū

walked and sketched *en plein air* around Wellington's coastline, and much of the southern North Island, is demonstrated in his prolific output of seascape and landscape paintings produced on location and back in his Wellington studio. Some of this work is in galleries, but much has passed through auctioneers who leave only a trail of thumbnail sized images to view. A snapshot of the range of his artistic skills is recorded in his sketchbook<sup>1</sup> spanning peace and wartime. A gallery of his works are in New Zealand's WW1 War Art collection.<sup>2</sup> These combined sources demonstrate his accomplishments as a landscape artist, a draughtsman sketching shipping, buildings and transport (mostly during his war years), and that he was not a confident figure painter<sup>3</sup> – an explanation for why he seldom included people in his works.

### The influence of James Nairn and Petrus van der Velden

Tony Mackle<sup>4</sup> noted that Nugent's formative years as an artist in Wellington coincided with the presence of artists James Nairn and Petrus van der Velden. Nugent was profoundly affected by their outlooks. Nairn was an advocate of *en plein air* and painting real objects in natural light. He had an impressionistic approach of wanting to capture the shifting effect of light and colour. Mackle regarded Nairn as introducing "one of the first instances of alternative 'modern' styles to New Zealand" which contrasted with the traditional, romantic style of painting that artists of that era were following. Van der Velden's influence is described by Edith Hall<sup>5</sup>. She records that van der Velden advised Nugent to "Go to Nature for instruction! ... and when discussing a painting of a wall of rock ... [that] 'The Holy Ghost is in that rock'". She concluded that "Here is the explanation of the rock-bound coast for Welch". A work that conveys the power of rock is



*Untitled (Sea, rocks and hill)* by Nugent Welch, Accession No: 75/81, Collection Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth

'Untitled (Sea, rocks and hill)': The prominent headland is silhouetted against a dark mass of clouds that threatens the onslaught of pounding wind and waves. The light is just bursting through clouds and the work has a brooding, atmospheric feel that expresses Nugent's interest in the movement of clouds over a landscape. But in general Nugent's landscapes were of a more restful and serene beauty, such as this painting of the Kaikoura Coast. He captured the blue of the skies seen in the region in winter and spring. Nugent's love of nature and the outdoors saw him happily revisit locations. By sketching and painting in different seasons, or times of day, he sought to capture the changing play of light in the scene. He had a practical need to be industrious and produce works of popular appeal as in his 20s he had chosen to earn his living as a full time artist. He did achieve financial success and exhibited for over 60 years.



*Kaikoura Coast, circa 1935* by Nugent Welch, Collection of Millennium Public Art Gallery, Blenheim

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## The form of the land

Nugent often used a horizontal form in his landscapes by positioning a low rise of trees, haystacks or buildings along the bottom edge of the painting with an expanse of sky above. Another form he used was a land surface that swept down, perhaps touching the sea, with sky above. His skilful blending of the sky to the land, through use of closely related tonal ranges<sup>i</sup>, produced very natural and balanced compositions. The following four paintings have a land surface sweeping down from the left, the same perspective, and were painted sequentially. The first is 'The morning muster', painted in 1913, which illustrates the influences of Nairn and van der Velden. There is careful attention to capturing the light on the clouds and detailed brushwork. Five years later, as a war artist, Nugent needed to capture the feel of the wasteland near Flers on the Somme. The expanses were quickly washed in with minimal brush strokes. Nugent had served as a sniper at Flers in 1916<sup>ii</sup> and returned in 1918 to make a visual record of the area.



Left: *The morning muster* by Nugent Welch; circa 1913 Te Papa Collection 1913-0004-1, Purchased 1913 by public subscription.

Right Nugent Welch, *Green Dump, Flers*, September 1918 Ref: AAAC 898 NCWA 425



Left: *Castle Point* by Nugent H. Welch Expressions Whirinaki Arts and Entertainment Centre Collection UHPC 1/37

Right: *Grey day, near Pukerua Bay* by Nugent Welch Te Papa Collection 1951-0003-4, Bequest of Robert Craig Ross, 1951

'Castle Point', painted post war, illustrates a freshness in Nugent's treatment of skies and his mastery of watercolour as a medium. Curatorial notes<sup>viii</sup> state "During the 1930s Welch moved away from Impressionism and began using modern blocks of pure colour to indicate forms such as the grass and sand dunes in this painting. The expansive sky dominating half the picture space is a characteristic Welch composition. His high viewpoint from a hill looks over the broad sweep of the landscape below and leads the eye towards the smooth blue horizon." The fourth painting 'Grey day, near Pukerua Bay' was painted prior to 1951. Nugent used a restricted palette of greys and blues, with close tonal gradations, to harmonise the work. He captures the mood of a sea that is stilled before the southerly comes up and Mana Island disappears in the rain.

Nugent used very traditional titles for his works naming them by place, season or the light such as 'Sunshine and shadow' but some titles were witty. Te Papa's Collection includes the somewhat droll 'The little vapour vagrant' which refers to a lone cloud in a blue sky. Mackle<sup>ix</sup> commented on 'Abandoned' which features a child's spade shoved into beach sand. While "the title is a wry, playful one on the attention span of children" it may hark back to Nugent's melancholic WW1 experiences and his oil painting of the pock-marked landscape of Polygon Wood<sup>x</sup> where a spade rests on the rubble ready to fill a crater or dig a grave.

## The war

Nugent's sketchbook at the Alexander Turnbull Library is a revelation. It documents Nugent's interest in shipping, his superb draughtsmanship and use of perspective. As his troop ship sailed over the Indian Ocean he was in his element painting billowing tropical cloud formations using quick washes to capture the light as the sun sank below the horizon. In wartime France he sketched trucks and ruined streets. Writing about Nugent's appointment in 1918 as an official War Artist, Lord<sup>xi</sup> noted that he was required to "pictorially document the NZEF's training camps, medical facilities and field activities." This included special appliances leading to paintings of tanks and howitzers. Lord observed that it is significant that Nugent's artworks "deliberately avoid depicting heroism or violence. Instead he focused on the destruction that was left in its wake ... [drawing] attention to the impact the war had on the local population whose towns, cities and farms were left devastated in the aftermath of battle". Lord described Nugent's painting of the 'Shell-wrecked YMCA Hut' as being a "mangled carcass" that had been "torn mercilessly through by shrapnel" and reminds of the "unburied dead in no man's land." Lord observed that Nugent represented "soldiers in miniature ... insignificantly small and fragile amongst the vastness of their surroundings and the overwhelming scale of the destruction." In Nugent's painting of the 'Ruins of Cloth Hall & Cathedral Ypres' two New Zealand soldiers are only recognisable by their lemon squeezer hats. In this work, produced post war, Nugent conveys beauty even within devastation. Nugent was at one with nature again.



Nugent Welch. Left: 2 vehicles sketched in pencil. E-940-019  
Right: *Bombed buildings in a street of Bapaume*, E-940-020 Alexander Turnbull Library



Nugent Welch, *Shell-wrecked YMCA Hut*, c.1918  
Ref: AAAC 898 NCWA 405

*Ruins of Cloth Hall & Cathedral Ypres 1918* by  
Nugent Welch Private Collection Watercolour  
& pencil, 37 x 34 cm  
"The Art of War" Exhibition 2014, Jonathan  
Grant Galleries, Auckland

<sup>i</sup> Welch, Nugent, Sketchbook of watercolours and pencil drawings of WW1 scenes, 1916-1918 Alexander Turnbull Library E-940

<sup>ii</sup> <http://warart.archives.govt.nz/NugentWelch>

<sup>iii</sup> Lord, Caroline, New Zealand's First World War artists Re-establishing their significance in our History. Heritage Matters (Rangiora NZ) AUT 2010; n.22:p.34

<sup>iv</sup> Mackle, Tony, Nugent Welch: Painting the Spirit of Nature. Journal of New Zealand art history, 2008; n.29:p.81

<sup>v</sup> Hall, T.D.H., The Art of Nugent Welch. Art in New Zealand, September 1933;p.12

<sup>vi</sup> Mackle op.cit. p.91

<sup>vii</sup> Haworth, Jennifer, Behind the twisted wire : New Zealand artists in World War I, Christchurch : Wily Publications, 2016 p.96

<sup>viii</sup> <https://www.expressions.org.nz/pumpkincottage/uhpc-1-37/>

<sup>ix</sup> Mackle op.cit. p.85

<sup>x</sup> <http://warart.archives.govt.nz/node/589>

<sup>xi</sup> Lord, op.cit. pp.34,35

# The Winsor & Newton NZ Summer Watercolour Competition 2020

This is our first summer competition and we are delighted that Winsor & Newton offered to sponsor it. Members painted on the theme "Summer in New Zealand" and entered the work by email. 48 works were submitted. The body of paintings is currently featured on our website and is a delightful celebration of New Zealand's summer colours and action.

## 1st place: *Barbara in her Summer Garden* by Jan Alldritt-Miller

The winning painting is featured on the front page.

Jan: A visit to Barbara's small Warkworth garden begins as one steps past the sweetly-perfumed gardenia bush into a magical realm. Weaving through a wildflower wilderness and fruiting trees, to an abundant, ordered veggie patch. From her garden she generously dispenses cuttings, seedlings and produce, together with great wisdom and insight into the workings of the human mind, nature and the planet.

Having not painted since my reluctant return to Auckland after the loss of my beloved gallery, last year's Watercolour New Zealand five day challenge prompted me to pick up my brushes again.

Pottering round Barbara's garden at New Year, my resolution to start painting again was rekindled. Where better to start than painting my best chum, a little garden sprite with her battered basket!



## 2nd Place: *Windsurfing on Waves* by Kasia Wiercinska

Kasia: I love watching the wind roll over the ocean's surface, crushing the waves and splashing water everywhere. I like watching sunlight creating beautiful shadows. Water, wind, sun and salt. You close your eyes and everything becomes blurry, undefined, waiting for your imagination. The background with the ocean and mountains was painted as 'wet on wet', using wax to preserve white parts of the sails. After the first layer was dry, I added a touch of accent colours to surfers and sails.

## 3rd place: *Sunday Promenade, Nelson Waterfront* by Shona McLean

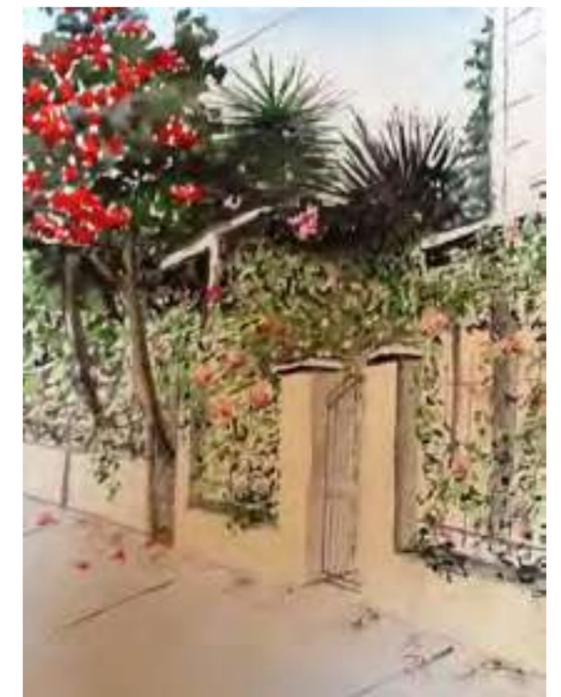
Shona: The inspiration was after years of coming and going with painting, I decided to commit myself to producing the best work I could. I love working with colour and line, and I love the looseness and brilliance of good gouache paints. I am enjoying the discipline of working from real life rather than just ideas from my head. That's quite a change for me.



*Summer at Diamond Harbour* by Don McAra



*The Summer Programme* by Phil Dickson



*Newtown Gardens* by Richard Acey



*The Bullock Track Dunedin, In Summer*  
by David Corballis



*An Amazing Day on the Hawkdun Range, with Cairn*  
by Gail Timmerman-Vaughan



*Beach Cabin* by Andrew James



*Sunset Drama and Fair at Petone* by Varun Gupta

# T. A. McCormack

## Drawing with the brush

by John Toft

As a young visitor to New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts exhibitions at Buckle Street in the late 1950s and 1960s I was drawn to the work of a handful of watercolour artists whose distinctive styles set them apart from the rest. They included E. Mervyn Taylor, better known for his wood engravings, Eric Lee-Johnson, Albert Wong and T. A. McCormack.

Thomas A. McCormack was born in Napier in 1883, the son of Irish immigrants. At the Marist brothers school in Napier there were only two things that interested him: art – the school inspector said his drawings were the best in the whole of Hawke's Bay – and sport. When he was seventeen, McCormack suffered a severe illness. From the age of seventeen to twenty-eight he was an invalid, enjoying only short periods of good health. Unable to pursue his passion for sport, he turned his attention to art and, as he later recalled, 'learnt how to handle that difficult medium watercolour – the medium best suited for pictorial expression'.

In 1917, McCormack began exhibiting with the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts. He became an artist member in 1918 and continued to exhibit regularly at the Academy until 1964.

In 1921, McCormack moved to Wellington, where he was to live for the next 44 years. McCormack and his wife Mabel – he married in 1924 – rented a studio flat at 83A Hill Street which had previously belonged to the artist D.K. Richmond.

McCormack's reputation was at its height from the 1930s to the 1950s. In a 1936 article, 'The Art of T.A. McCormack', Roland Hipkins wrote 'His efforts ... have remarkable freshness, breadth and simplicity, with spontaneous brushwork and a rare quality of colour.' Another admirer, David Martineau, wrote that it was 'refreshing' to come from an exhibition of work by Royal Academician Lamorna Birch at the National Gallery in 1937 and to '...enter the quiet studio of Mr T. A. McCormack, who has been holding an exhibition of watercolour drawings. There is a surprise of originality in these paintings, and in some even an occasional moment of spiritual urgency.' In 1945, the Department of External Affairs sponsored a solo exhibition of McCormack's work which toured to New York and Ottawa. Wellington gallery owner Helen Hitchings included him in an exhibition of New Zealand art in London in 1955. McCormack was one of five New Zealand watercolourists shown by Auckland City Art Gallery in 1959. As part of the first Festival of Wellington in 1959 the Academy presented an exhibition of 59 works by McCormack and 59 by his great friend Nugent Welch, together with a retrospective display of work by other New Zealand artists. The Academy later presented a solo show of 170 of McCormack's works in 1971–72.

McCormack was awarded a Coronation Medal in 1953, followed by an OBE in 1956 for his services to art. Three years later his wife, Mabel, died. In 1965 his health deteriorated and he returned to Hawke's Bay, where he lived at the Little Sisters of the Poor Home in Hastings until his death, aged 90, on 26 June 1973.

'I have always liked drawing and painting but am no art school product', McCormack wrote. Essentially self-taught, he spoke of evenings spent in the Wellington Public Library studying books of painting. Much has been made of the influence of Chinese art on McCormack's painting style. While it is true that he paid many visits to an exhibition of Chinese art at the Dominion Museum in 1937, I am inclined to agree with Gil Docking, who wrote in *Two Hundred and Forty Years of New Zealand Painting* 'his one mild

extravagance seems to have been his fondness for collecting Chinese porcelain and pottery. Many of these objects were used in studio still-life paintings, being virtually the limit of any Chinese influence on his style of painting'. To my eye McCormack's calligraphic brushwork more closely resembles that of French artist Raoul Dufy, whose work he is known to have admired. J.C. Beaglehole summed up the question of artists who influenced McCormack very aptly: 'Of course he has learned from this man and that, mainly by a process of unconscious absorption'.

McCormack wrote 'An artist develops from his surroundings – the sea, rivers, plains and mountains. His friends and fellow artists, ... Wellington with its magnificent harbour, its Art Gallery, exhibitions and artists, a trip to Sydney of about nine months' duration were factors in my development'.

Landscapes were the mainstay of McCormack's watercolours, followed by flowers and still life. Although he painted throughout New Zealand, his favourite landscape subjects were Wellington's harbour and south coast, together with river scenes painted in the Hutt Valley.

*Coast Scene* (c.1937) depicts the view on a calm sunny day looking south from Island Bay across Cook Strait. As with many of McCormack's watercolours, he applies thin transparent washes of colour – in this respect his technique is similar to that of Cezanne's watercolours – then uses calligraphic brushwork to delineate pattern, form and detail. Like many of McCormack's paintings, *Coast Scene* contains strong decorative elements.



*Coast scene, circa 1937, Wellington, by Thomas McCormack. Te Papa Collections. Gift of the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts, 1937*

*Seascape* (c.1955) depicts a different mood of Wellington's south coast. McCormack executes the painting using a limited, almost monochromatic, palette. The energy of his calligraphic brushwork conveys the movement of the breaking waves.

*Orongorongo Mountains* (1950s) brings together McCormack's three favourite subjects – flowers, still life and landscape – in a single painting depicting the view from his Hill Street studio. On the windowsill, a vase of anemones is flanked by two pieces of pottery. Patterned lace curtains frame the view through the window. Blossoms on the branches outside provide an additional decorative element. The view looks across Wellington Harbour to the Orongorongs and their highest peak, Mount Matthews. This



*Orongorongo Mountains, 1950s, Wellington, by Thomas McCormack. Gift of the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts, 1958. © Te Papa. CC BY-NC-ND 4.0. Te Papa (1958-0001-1)*



*Poppies, 1940s, New Zealand, by Thomas McCormack. Bequest of C. Millan Thompson, 1959. © Te Papa. CC BY-NC-ND 4.0. Te Papa (1959-0025-5)*

is one of McCormack's most decorative works. He painted a number of similar interior/exterior motifs, as did Matisse, Bonnard and Raoul Dufy before him.

During his lifetime, fellow artists and critics lavished praise on McCormack's work. A somewhat unlikely admirer was Toss Woollaston who visited him at his studio in 1937. Woollaston greatly admired what he called McCormack's 'precisely sensitive and strongly elegant watercolours'. John Cam Duncan was even more effusive. In a 1939 *Evening Post* article entitled "New Zealand's Place in Art", he wrote 'McCormack's watercolours are in a category of their own. His Art is more in the nature of poetry than painting, and, in the same sense, it has an ethereal beauty and grace which are unique. I have a strong personal conviction that the artist is dangerously near to being a genius'. In *Letters and Art in New Zealand* (1940), E. H. McCormick proclaimed that 'the greatest individual achievement of recent New Zealand art has been the watercolours of T. A. McCormack'. Janet Paul wrote in the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* (1998), 'His exquisite control of the medium of watercolour is equalled in New Zealand only by Frances Hodgkins and Rita Angus'. Notwithstanding this fulsome praise, McCormack's reputation has declined over the years. Like his friend Nugent Welch his works do not generally attract high prices at auction.

McCormack was one of New Zealand's first full-time painters. His wife Mabel worked as a nurse and as a music teacher. Her earnings supported them during the depression years when his paintings didn't sell. His wife's income, together with money from McCormack's painting sales, afforded them a modest standard of living.

At a time when most New Zealand artists went overseas to study McCormack stayed in New Zealand and, like Rita Angus and Toss Woollaston, developed his own unique and distinctive style. Wellington artist Joan Fanning (1912–2000), who attended McCormack's Saturday afternoon classes from 1938–40, recalled how his 'complete and utter dedication to his work' made a lasting impression on her.

'Art', McCormack wrote, 'is a matter of feeling and expression'. Joan Fanning recalled that he taught his students to draw directly with the brush and to carefully observe the essentials of the subject. Through his distinctive use of decorative calligraphic brushwork, colour and design T. A. McCormack developed an original and individual style with which to express his unique personal vision.



*Lupins by T.A. McCormack. Te Papa Collections. Gift of the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts, 1949*



*Seascape, circa 1955, Wellington, by Thomas McCormack. Bequest of C. Millan Thompson, 1959. © Te Papa. CC BY-NC-ND 4.0. Te Papa (1959-0025-7)*

# The Waikato Watercolourists

By Clive Gilson Ph.D, Emeritus Professor and member of the Board of Trustees for The Welcome Swallow Gallery

The recently expanded Welcome Swallow Gallery<sup>1</sup> in Hamilton East, into a 200 square metre space, provided an opportunity for the Gallery Trustees to curate exhibitions that involved, alongside traditional wall-hung art, novel compositions such as textiles and ceramics. However, between 14 February and 31 March the Gallery is concentrating solely on the medium of watercolours with a focus on the Waikato region. It is not often that a specific geography is called for in curation. Led by John Fergusson and Samuel Peplow, The Scottish Colourists spring to mind, yet the geographic nomenclature was critically added as a post hoc method that was designed to create an understanding of the contribution made by prominent Scottish artists in the first few decades of the twentieth century. In parallel, there have been many less than revealing debates regarding the emergence of a discernible form of New Zealand art or otherwise. The curation of The Waikato Watercolourists Exhibition has much more modest aims. Over several exhibitions this past year in the Welcome Swallow Gallery it became increasingly obvious that many Waikato-inspired compositions were being submitted by local artists, whose chosen medium tended to be watercolours.

The next logical step was for the Gallery to assist in the formation of the Waikato

Watercolourists Society<sup>2</sup> that is now based at the Welcome Swallow Gallery. From this initiative the Trustees of the Gallery both invited and challenged these artists to develop their own insights into how they felt their home might be effectively represented. Additionally, the Gallery had already developed a growing interest in watercolours by prior exhibiting of paintings by Frances Hodgkins, Rita Angus and Britain's foremost watercolourist, Sir William Russell Flint. Moreover, even a cursory knowledge of art history records that many of the great artists, such as Turner, Hopper, O'Keefe, Webb, Sargent and van Gogh were all supreme in this medium. And in New Zealand we need look no further than the 1958 Watercolour exhibition where Rita Angus along with four other watercolourists, first presented both *Irises and Fungi*.

The brief for this exhibition that was shared with the artists, was deliberately vague with a view to allowing the artists enough licence to choose a varied slate of compositions. We certainly anticipated traditional New Zealand fare, viz. landscape and light, with perhaps more forensic approaches to flora and fauna.

This was obtained but with additional socio-cultural commentary that was not envisaged. As a result, the exhibition boasts 41 compositions that currently stand alone as the only illustration of the Waikato by artists who have used their skill and chosen styles to provide a unique coherent commentary on the world around them.

Although holistic enjoyment is to be had, the curation of this exhibition falls into six categories; Rites of Passage, Iconic Hamilton, Bucolic Bliss, Exotic Flora, Idyllic Reflections and Sound Tracks. Each artist has clearly developed their style through time, mixed and constituted with distinct echoes from deep history within the watercolour genre. Nevertheless, these are compositions that can only have become manifest from a Waikato tableau.

It is fascinating to see how each artist wears their conceptual badges of honour forged from within established parameters of the watercolourists who set the standards by which all subsequent artists are inevitably judged. In this sense The Waikato Watercolourists establishes a footprint that locates the exhibition artists firmly within a larger historical narrative. Shared here are six examples that demonstrate how their compositions have created an additional contour to the history of New Zealand watercolourists<sup>3</sup>.

## Rites of Passage

There will be few residents of the Waikato who are unfamiliar with the Waitomo glow worm caves. Rebecca Dowman-Ngapo's evocative composition, *End of a Journey – Blackwater Rafting*, *Waitomo* captures this moment. The painting is bursting with energy as each member of the party hauls themselves into daylight. Like Homer's 1934 rendering of *The Cherry Pickers*, each person maintains a private relationship with their immediate task environment, dedicated to purposefully carry out their intended warrant.



## Iconic Hamilton

Much of modern life in the Waikato is driven by the footprint of its largest city, Hamilton. *The Fairfield Bridge*, instantly recognisable, is dramatically captured by Paulette Bruns who emphasises the proud curvature of the bridge spans that connect both sides of the city across the Waikato river, whereas Hopper's 1934–38 *Country Bridge*, eschews such bold modernity in favour of locating the bridge spans as nestled and integrated into a timeless rural setting. While Hopper's quest to capture the essence of America can be seen here, it is equally evident that Bruns's *Fairfield Bridge* achieves a similar distinction regarding the Waikato.



## Bucolic Bliss

Sandra Barlow's submission *The Glade*, like John Singer Sargent's 1903 painting, *Olive Trees*, invites the viewer to experience a gentle walk with a backdrop of trees that assist in choosing the direction of travel. Barlow's rendition is however less realist and more imaginary with ghost trees behind the main avenue and a generous mist that plays mystically in the background. This is surely a reference to the Waikato basin's bouts of temperature inversion that frequently brings these mists to ground level.



## Exotic Flora

Diane Mayson-Hewitt's painting, *Celebration*, fits well in a traditional of floral representations by New Zealand artists where precision is valued for the way in which form and colour are best captured. Further afield, Carolyn Brady's 2004 watercolour, *Violet Pink Garden Poppy* offers an illustration of her noted genre of photorealism that also echoes in Mayson-Hewitt's composition.



In direct contrast to this is the impressionistic work of Denise White, whose *Spring Blooms* in Ohaupo takes greater reference from the works of Cezanne whose technique of overlapping watercolour washes is evident in his 1902, *Mont Sainte-Victoire* painting. For White, this is the best method that can be used to catch the munificent cacophony of colour that the Waikato displays.

## Idyllic Reflections

Bernadette Parsons, a well-recognised New Zealand Watercolourist and winner of the People's Choice Award at *Splash* 2017 has provided the exhibition with a series of her signature impressionistic works that are an extension of her landscape art seen in New Zealand and overseas. Featured here is a powerful composition entitled *Whangamarino Wetlands*. With strong gestural lines and a swirling firmament above, it is not outlandish to place this work alongside some of Turner's finest. His work, *The Dark Rigi*, *the Lake of Lucerne*, painted in 1842 evokes intense passion between the fluid interplay of light, land and water, creating a similar atmosphere to that of Parsons' work. Never has the Waikato been so dramatically represented.



The Waikato Watercolourists exhibition at the Welcome Swallow Gallery has provided six outstanding watercolour artists with an opportunity to demonstrate how their chosen medium can create commentary and insight about their surroundings, the Waikato. When artistic skills blend with socially useful talents and observational acumen, the results, as in this case, are simply spectacular.

Further information about the Welcome Swallow Gallery can be found at:

Website: [www.wsgalleryandgifts.com](http://www.wsgalleryandgifts.com)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/the.welcome.swallow](https://www.facebook.com/the.welcome.swallow)

Instagram: [www.instagram.com/wsgalleryandgifts/](https://www.instagram.com/wsgalleryandgifts/)

Full catalogues of all previous exhibitions can be found on the Gallery website.

<sup>1</sup> The Gallery is run by the Achieving Change for Children Charitable Trust that raises money for Children's charities in the Waikato. All staff and Board members are unpaid volunteers.

<sup>2</sup> The artists that have formed the WWS are: Sandra Barlow, Paulette Bruns, Rebecca Dowman-Ngapo, Diane Mayson-Hewitt, Bernadette Parsons and Denise White.

<sup>3</sup> In each case the current exhibition piece is to the left.

To request further information email: [bookings@watercolournewzealand.nz](mailto:bookings@watercolournewzealand.nz)

## Paintaway in Whanganui – a First Timer's Impressions

Report by Tina Seifarth

Will I fit in? Will I make a fool of myself? Will I be good enough? ... Why are artists such a self-doubting lot? Anyway, to make it short, of course all my doubts were pointless and I had a great time with a great bunch of lovely people, who had come from all over New Zealand, from Blenheim in the South to Whangarei in the North. Most of us stayed at the Whanganui River Top 10 Holiday

Park, which offers a variety of motel accommodations as well as a camping area for tents and campervans.

Sue Wild found many interesting places for us to paint, so every outing offered new challenges – the Saturday market, old buildings in the CBD, beautifully restored villas, or dilapidated ones, views over the river valley, an old church with a crooked spire, Kai Iwi beach, the Bason Botanic Gardens (the flower garden is truly magical, if you ask me) and more to choose from. Whanganui and its surroundings offer so many paintable sights we could have stayed another two weeks without running short of inspiration. It was so nice to be painting alongside like-minded people, having the opportunity to get advice from experienced artists like Jacky Pearson, Charlotte Hird and Pete James. And would you believe it, Pete even sold the painting of an old shed on the spot, while painting it.

Apart from dinner at a restaurant on Saturday, we gathered at Sue's accommodation every evening, to share food, drinks and chat, and discuss our impressive, daily-growing exhibition.

One of the most impressive paintings for me was from Sandy Kincaid. It showed how a seemingly "failed" painting can turn into an almost abstract one with strong, expressive brushstrokes, even if it's unintentional!

A big thank you to Sue Wild for organising a wonderful event, also to Lynne Crooks, Lynne Ciochetto and Sandy Kincaid for making tasty shared dinners and to every participant for making it so enjoyable and interesting. I can't wait to meet you all again.



### Weekend Workshop

#### POWER OF TONE

Tutor: Min Kim – Guest artist for *Splash* 2019

Dates: 28–29 March 2020

This workshop is full. We expect to run another workshop later in 2020 tutored by Min Kim. Priority will be given to those who applied for Min's 2019 workshop and did not get a place.

Class 2020/1

### Weekend Workshop in association with Karori Arts Centre

#### HOW TO DRAW BIRDS

Tutor: Kimbra Taylor

Venue: Karori Arts Centre, 7 Beauchamp Street, Karori, Wellington

Dates: 2 & 3 May 2020

Class level: All

Times: 9:30am–5:00pm

Student fee: \$180 (\$95 for first day only – available only if space permits)

Kimbra will teach you to draw a bird using sighting to support accuracy. She will teach the techniques used by professional artists to achieve proportion and guide you through the process step by step. You will gain an understanding of construction drawing, which can be applied to everything you draw. Kimbra is encouraging and supportive. You will gain the skills to proceed to the workshop on painting birds in watercolour, later in 2020.

To book this workshop please email [info@kacc.org.nz](mailto:info@kacc.org.nz) or phone 04 476 6817

Class 2020/2



### Weekend Workshop in association with Karori Arts Centre

#### PERSPECTIVE APPLIED EN PLEIN AIR

Tutor: Charlotte Hird

Venue: Karori Arts Centre, 7 Beauchamp Street, Karori, Wellington

Dates: 23 & 24 May 2020

Class level: All

Times: 9:30am–5:00pm

Student fee: \$175

In this workshop you will learn techniques to use 1 point, 2 point and 3 point perspective en plein air. We will spend some time outdoors sketching. Dress warmly and bring a stool. This workshop will appeal to urban sketchers and artists, working in any medium, who are keen to improve their understanding of perspective. Handouts will be provided. The tutor will use camera and projector to demonstrate. In 2018 Charlotte taught architectural drawing at Wuhan University, China.

To book this workshop please email [info@kacc.org.nz](mailto:info@kacc.org.nz) or phone 04 476 6817

Class 2020/3



### Weekend Workshop

#### FOR THE LOVE OF LANDSCAPE

Tutor: Bernadette Parsons

Venue: Karori Arts Centre, 7 Beauchamp Street, Karori, Wellington

Dates: 27 & 28 June 2020

Class level: All

Times: 9:30am–5:00pm

Student fee: \$180

Bernadette has charmed viewers at *Splash* exhibitions with her work, winning merit awards and the 2014 Supreme Award. She uses a limited palette of beautiful colours and simplifies her subject into strong clean shapes. Her students will get started with a paintbrush promptly. The weekend will include discussion on composition, colour, brush-work, rendering trees and more.

To book this workshop please email [bookings@watercolournewzealand.nz](mailto:bookings@watercolournewzealand.nz)

Class 2020/4



### Weekend Workshop in association with Karori Arts Centre

#### CAPTURING BIRDS IN WATERCOLOUR

Tutor: Kimbra Taylor

Venue: Karori Arts Centre, 7 Beauchamp Street, Karori, Wellington

Dates: 11 & 12 July 2020

Class level: All

Times: 9:30am–5:00pm

Student fee: \$180 (\$95 for first day only – available only if space permits)

Discounted Cost: \$155 (applies to those who attended the two-day How to Draw Birds Workshop)

In this workshop, Kimbra will teach techniques for painting birds in watercolour, showing you how to achieve a soft, luxurious look in the feathers. She provides step by step instructions taking you through the layering of light subtle tones and dark sumptuous tones to create the wonderful range of feathers that look complicated but are actually quite doable.

To book this workshop please email [info@kacc.org.nz](mailto:info@kacc.org.nz) or phone 04 476 6817

Class 2020/5

# OUTDOOR PAINTING GROUPS

**WELLINGTON GROUP** 10:00am. Followed by coffee at a nearby café.

- Sunday 15 March Breaker Bay, Breaker Bay Road, Seatoun (meet at the carpark, just through the Pass of Branda)
- Sunday 19 April Otari-Wilton bush, Wilton Road (meet at the entrance to the plant museum)
- Sunday 17 May Frank Kitts Park (South end overlooking the lagoon), Waterloo Quay, Wellington CBD waterfront



**KAPITI GROUP** 10:00am. Followed by lunch at a local café.

Coordinator: Audrey Moore (04) 904 6382

- 8 March Eppie Murton's garden & studio, 111 Ngatiawa Road, Reikorangi. Across railway line at Waikanae (Elizabeth St)
- 5 April Paraparaumu Beach shops and beachfront area.
- 10 May Otaki rail area, station, pub, shops, old courthouse, old houses Dunstan Street
- 14 June Waikanae Beach "Olde" area, shops etc., beach.

## OTHER DATES for your Diary

- Sunday 8 March Watercolour New Zealand AGM: 2pm at Karori Arts Centre, Karori, Wellington
- 28 & 29 March Weekend workshop with Min Kim – details on page 15
- 31 March Opening of exhibition at Bowen House, Wellington of works by five Watercolour New Zealand members
- 2 & 3 May Weekend workshop with Kimbra Taylor – details on page 15
- 8–13 May Paintaway to Methven – Register at [bookings@watercolournewzealand.nz](mailto:bookings@watercolournewzealand.nz)
- 23 & 24 May Weekend workshop with Charlotte Hird – details on page 15
- 27 & 28 June Weekend workshop with Bernadette Parsons – details on page 15
- 11 & 12 July Weekend workshop with Kimbra Taylor – details on page 15



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