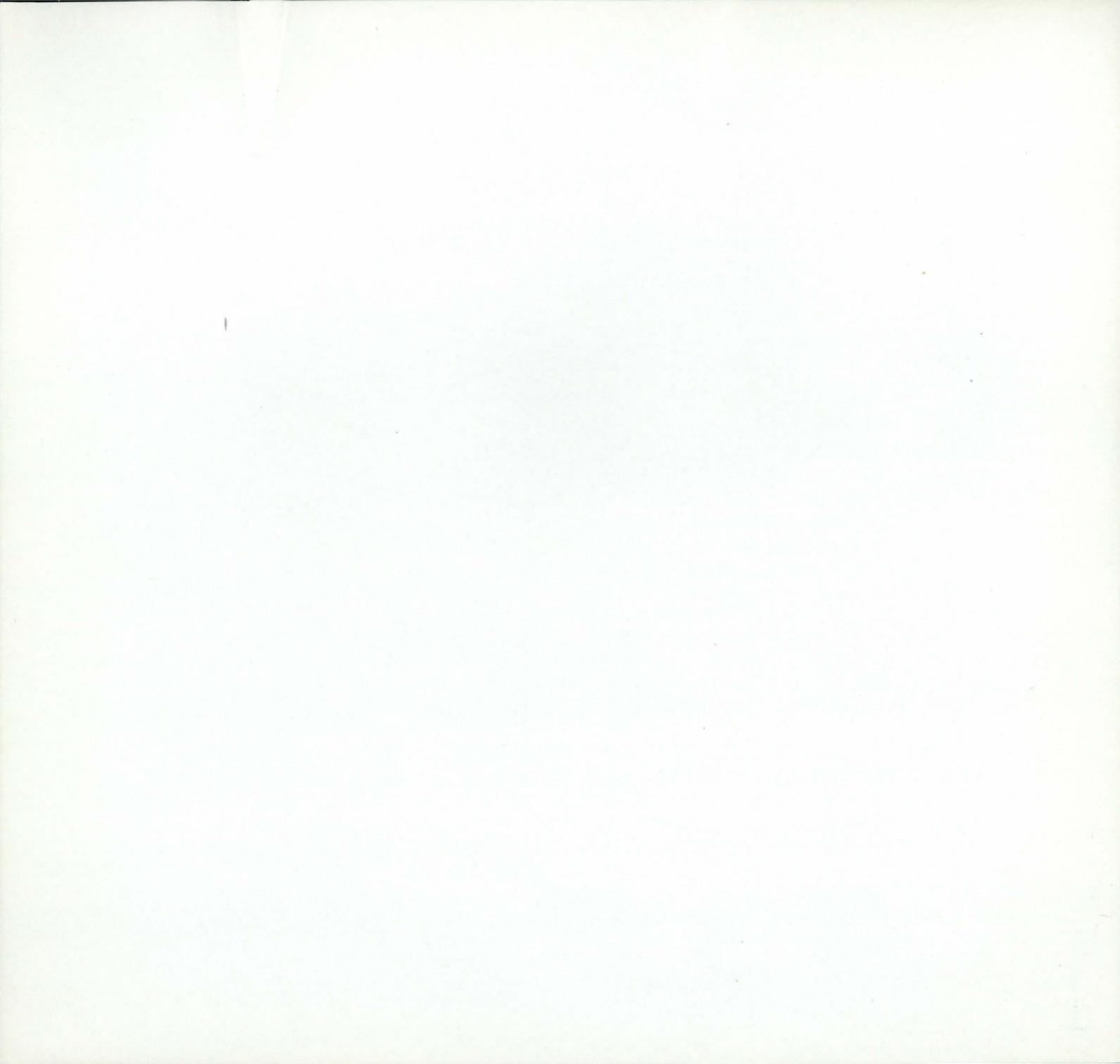


1973
.64

**BAIGENT
COLLINS
FIELDS**

Three New Zealand Photographers



GARY BAIGENT

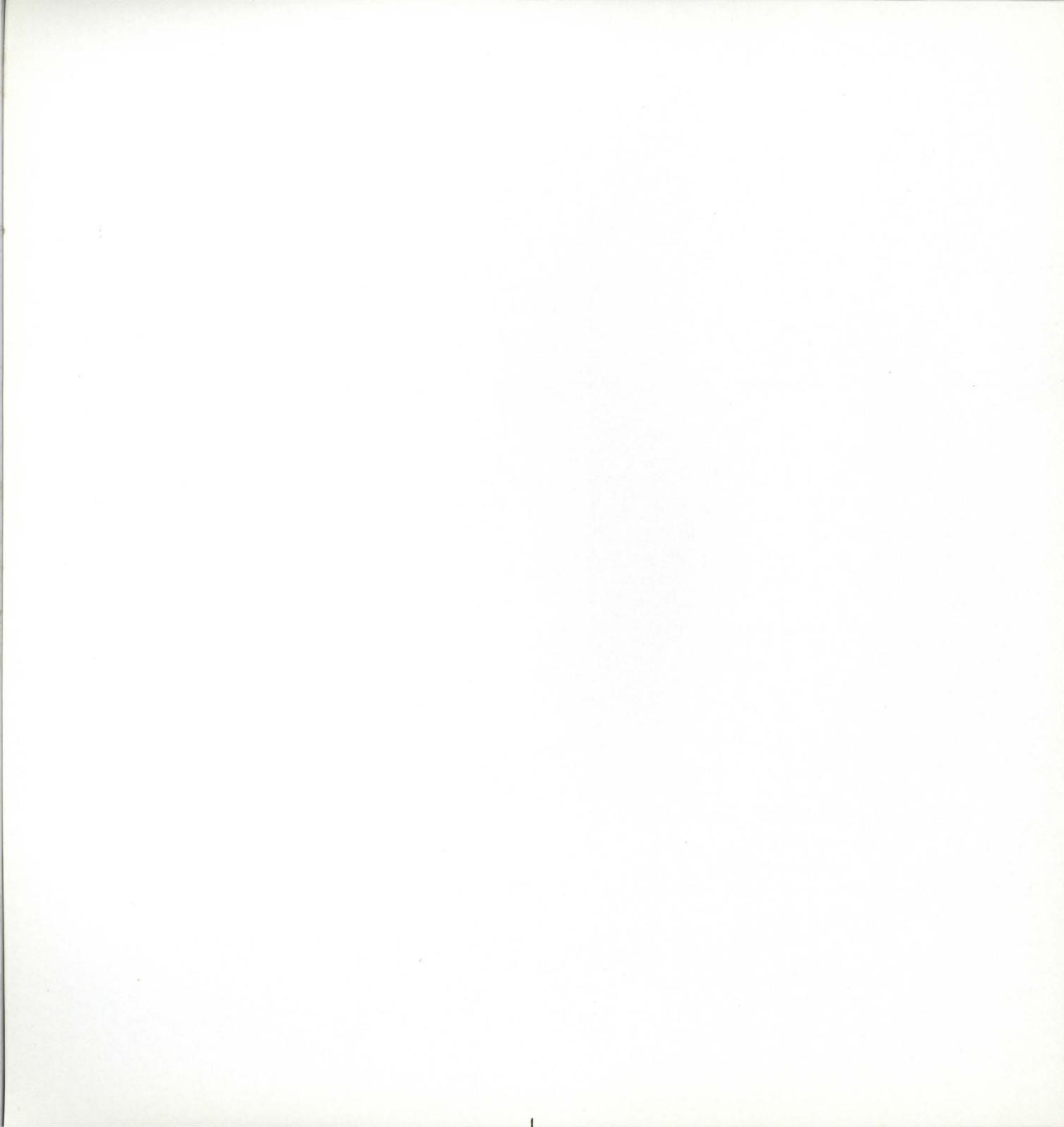
RICHARD COLLINS

JOHN FIELDS

THREE NEW ZEALAND PHOTOGRAPHERS

A survey exhibition of contemporary New Zealand photographs arranged for the Auckland City Art Gallery by John B. Turner, lecturer in photography at the School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland.

Published by the Auckland City Art Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand.
February 1973.



Acknowledgements

In 1970 the Auckland Festival Society invited me to prepare a photographic exhibition for the Auckland Centenary Arts Festival of 1971. This exhibition was proposed to give a long overdue introduction to contemporary New Zealand photography. The exhibition was subsequently postponed in favour of the Brassai retrospective, and a year later, the Bill Brandt retrospective – both of which were from the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The delay has perhaps been fortunate. Since 1970 we have had the opportunity to study the work of some of our major pioneer photographers; in the *Maori in Focus* and *Nineteenth Century New Zealand Photographs* exhibitions. Appropriately, this exhibition will be seen while the Museum of Modern Art's currently touring *New Photography U.S.A.* show is still fresh in our minds.

I am indebted to Gary Baigent, Richard Collins and John Fields for their generosity, tolerance and goodwill in allowing me complete access to their work. On behalf of the Auckland City Art Gallery, I also wish to thank the photographers for making their work available for the duration of the tour.

For both background information and valued criticism I am grateful to Marie Collins, Tom Hutchins and Max Oetli.

For their work on the myriad of details relating to the organisation and preparation of the exhibition and catalogue, and for their enthusiasm throughout all stages of production, I particularly wish to thank Ross Ritchie and Peter Webb of the Exhibitions Department of the Auckland City Art Gallery.

J.B.T.

FOREWORD

THREE NEW ZEALAND PHOTOGRAPHERS is an exhibition which the Auckland City Art Gallery is obviously pleased and proud to present. After its current showing it will be circulated throughout the country's art galleries.

Besides the insights provided by the points of view of the three photographers, so ably described by the Special Curator of this exhibition, John B. Turner, there is another aspect of this showing which should be of particular interest to our public: it is not an isolated event. Rather, it belongs to a coherent programme of scheduled exhibitions of the arts of New Zealand which the City Gallery will present consistently and frequently over the next years. The programme is, in itself, a balanced one. Further, it will fit in, fruitfully, with the over-riding aims of the general programme of the Gallery's carefully planned temporary exhibitions.

Such planning and programming are based on a number of considerations which serve as the guidelines to the Gallery's varied activities. The overarching imperative is the definition of the Gallery's function: *a non-coercive educational institution at the service of all*. The operative word here is, of course, "education". Under the above, a number of factors require priorities and, within these priorities, which must balance with those pertaining to other areas of the programme, a secondary balance must be found. In practice, this means that the Gallery must studiously avoid over-emphasising painting as *the art*, as against sculpture, graphics or photography; it must not view itself as, primarily, an exclusive showcase for overseas exhibitions. Just as necessary to a significant programme is that the Auckland City Art Gallery should not usurp the role of the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council as arbiter of New Zealand art nor should it, on the other hand, so over-expose the contemporary New Zealand artist that his or her showings at private galleries

lose their attraction to a buying public whose serious curiosity would have been over-satisfied. Then, there is the matter of age groupings within the Gallery's actual and potential public. In this field generalisations are perilous. Returning to the definition of this Institution's educational function removes, to some extent, these pitfalls. It is dubious, for example, that an exhibition of primary school children's painting from around the world (a number of which are always in circulation) would ever prove more than cutely amusing to adults, pleased in a detached way by the universality of childish forthright naivete in developing equally universal ideograms. For the youngsters within our public such an exhibition proposes no new goals, adds no new standards, either to their perception or their performance. Such a show, measured by any standard, can not be educational. Of acknowledged interest to behaviourists and psychologists, an exhibition of this type may be effectively duplicated by a large number of highly illustrated scholarly books, readily available to specialists.

Such, among a few dozen others, are the imponderables that must govern a long-range exhibitions programme if it is to have both coherence and, once again, balance.

It is in the light of this view of our acknowledged responsibilities that we trust that the present display will be welcomed and enjoyed by our public and, as the showing circulates subsequently, by the New Zealand public, as part of this Gallery's emphatic plan to display the lively visual arts of this country.

And now, a personal recollection which speaks to the aims and motivations of the photographers in this exhibition. In his discussion of Richard Collins, John Turner mentions the influences derived from, among others, Cartier-Bresson, world-renowned as the main force behind Magnum Photos who inspired, a decade ago, of

a shattering epic photographic exhibition, *The Family of Man*.

In 1957, high above Texas, I found myself, with a hundred or more others in a chartered plane taking us to a special art exhibition and a few homes of sophisticated private collectors. In the next seat was Cartier-Bresson. For a few days he had been, and still was, on assignment for *Life* magazine. He bobbed up and down, capturing on film every small incident in the cabin during this short flight, jumping into the central aisle, standing on a vacant seat, snapping rapidly, repeatedly, with one or another of the three cameras dangling on his chest. Nevertheless, we talked at length. He was as candid as any of his landmark photographs. Relaxed, perhaps, by being able to converse freely in his native tongue, Cartier-Bresson, the expressive photographer, spoke eloquently of his field of work. He spoke, without sententious pontificating, of its satisfactions.

And then, this creative, legendary, photographer told me, as we touched ground and slowly taxied to the terminal, of his compulsive need. He had to paint. His most exultant joy came only, he said, when he did.

Cartier-Bresson, *artiste-peintre*: quite a calling-card.

Richard Teller Hirsch
DIRECTOR

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Design and typography: Ross Ritchie
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THREE NEW ZEALAND PHOTOGRAPHERS

Introduction

The relative 'cultural vacuum' John Fields felt when he arrived from the United States in 1966 was perhaps nowhere more apparent than in New Zealand photography. Even the newly published *Encyclopaedia of New Zealand* led one to believe that, commercial work apart, the only tradition of expressive photography was that of the camera clubs.¹ While it is true that the hobbyist or so-called 'pictorial' movement is particularly widespread in New Zealand, its basically obscurant view of photography has seldom had currency among independent workers.

Fields, in fact, had arrived just in time to help accelerate the growing movement toward a more relevant and truly contemporary view of both photography and New Zealand.

This collection shows some of the major concerns and significant images of three of the main participants in this movement. The photographs, which embrace the last decade, have been selected, as much for their didactic as their intrinsic value, from a large body of work by each photographer. The selection does not, therefore, necessarily coincide with the photographer's own view. Many of the photographs have not previously been exhibited or published. Although much research is yet to be done in the history of New Zealand photography, it is becoming clear that few of our photographers can be considered artists in the best sense of that

word. 'Art' photography has too long been associated with greased nudes and slick advertising.

John Szarkowski has pointed out that 'The difference between art and other important cultural influences (automobiles, political revolts, famines, etc) lies in the fact that the latter change the world directly, while art changes only the sensibility through which we understand the world'.

The best photographers, like Cartier-Bresson or Bill Brandt or Brassai are artists, 'not because they have persuaded us which car to buy or which candidate to vote for or even which wars we should support, but because of a more modest and a more fundamental thing: they have changed the way we use our eyes and our minds to puzzle out our own sense of what the world is like. Perhaps,' he added, 'the crux of the problem is this: commercially viable work attempts a better answer to a question which is already understood; creative work suggests a new question.'²

New Zealand has a handful of photographers who may be artists in that sense: Gary Baigent, Richard Collins and John Fields are three of them. In photographing real things, real events and real people, these photographers are doing a vital and necessary thing. They are showing us the life we live now: the very existence as well as the problems and aspirations of our country today.

Their photographs express not only the photographer's moral obligation to the truth of his subject, but also the honesty of his concern. If it is the photographer's job to reveal, describe and interpret what he sees, it is our responsibility as his audience to try to understand what he says. We inextricably share the onus of the message whether it brings good news or bad.

The biggest obstacle in understanding photography lies in the medium's paradoxical objectivity. We must learn not to confuse the *objects* photographed with the *subject* of the picture. The more 'documentary' or convincingly realistic a photograph seems, the more we need to remember the man behind the camera who created that illusion.

If we take Gary Baigent's *Tomtit*, (Cat. No. 8) for example, we immediately see and recognise the objects: a bird – a tomtit – a gorse bush, and less distinctly, the cloud-covered hills in the background. If we add them up to 'A tomtit on a gorse bush' and move on, we have missed the point of the picture. Its real value lies in the significance the photographer saw in it at that moment: the meaning as well as the interest and beauty he saw in the form and balance of the objects. In addition, the photographer has created a picture, with its own logic, beauty and coherence.

But the real meaning of the picture lies in its poetry – all that, in fact, which would be missed at a glance. We must look further to delight in the perfectly natural poise of that bird, so delicately perched on the tip of that sharp prong of gorse, which both protects it and elevates it above Man and the hills in the background, which in turn echo its soft dumpy form. Then, perhaps, we may start to see other things and feel the dampness of the air and the ground underfoot. This photograph is a record, although it would



8 Tomtit, Taipo Valley, Westland, 1967

not tell the ornithologist very much; it is a document of sorts, call it what you like: but above all it is a poet's view of that valley at that time.

The picture just mentioned is one the least complex statements, illusions, allusions, in this collection which traces the development of each photographer as he has learned the language of his medium and the craftsmanship which makes his vision a living reality.

The artist in any medium is judged ultimately not on the degree of acceptance, popularity, notoriety or financial success which surrounds his work but on a more sober truth: the tradition of his medium and what he, as an individual, brings to that tradition.

That is both the object and subject of this catalogue and exhibition.

John B. Turner,
December 1972.

- 1 *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, Vol 2, edited by A. H. McLintock. 'Photography' section pp. 769-70, by Dr J. T. Salmon, Government Printer, 1966.
- 2 *Newsweek*, *Newsweek Global Report*, 7 October, 1968, p. 6, 'The Art of Photography: A contradiction in terms?', by John Szarkowski.

Catalogue

GARY BAIGENT

Gary Baigent was born in Wakefield, Nelson, in 1941. Educated at Nelson College, he majored in painting at the University of Canterbury's School of Fine Arts from 1960 to 1962. He discovered photography late in the last term of '62 while working on an assignment in book design: Dennis Stock's *Jazz Street* photographs in *Life* magazine seemed to have everything he wanted to express in his own work at that time. A few days later, he bought his first camera and began to photograph: student friends, Christchurch city and the high-country areas of Nelson, Westland and Canterbury, were favourite subjects.

In 1963, he moved north for a post-graduate year at the Auckland Teachers' College. Teaching, however, did not suit his temperament – he much preferred the freedom of movement which photography not only permitted but encouraged. But 'middle class values "came on strong"', he later acknowledged, so he could not drop teaching without doing something respectable in its place. He decided to free-lance as a photographer on a book on New Zealand, and determined to have it published by his twenty-sixth birthday.

Work toward the New Zealand book was shelved in favour of one on Auckland when a friend offered to write the text. They sought a publisher when the text and some photographs were ready. The publisher preferred the photographs without the text and asked Baigent to carry on alone.

He worked in timber yards, on the railway, in both wool and paper stores, and at commercial fishing off the Cavalli Islands, which both paid for and provided him with unique opportunities for photography. Late in 1966, his book, to be called *The Unseen City*, was accepted for publication and scheduled for a September 1967 appearance.

Baigent continued to photograph whenever possible, and for a brief spell, tried his hand as a trainee cine-cameraman for the NZBC: a job which landed him with an even briefer appearance as himself, with cameras and motorbike in a television feature about his Auckland photographs.

The Unseen City was enthusiastically received by Auckland's press and its youthful public. Many saw it as a refreshingly unconventional look at their favourite city: a place of 'strange sights and dark moods . . . an unusual, unexpectedly exotic metropolis'.¹ Most agreed that Baigent's view of the city 'warts and all', was a welcome antidote to the flood of 'beautiful New Zealand' publications.

Following the favourable public reaction, several photographers appeared in print, as if from nowhere, it seemed to Baigent, to criticise his work on *photographic* grounds. The critics agreed he showed great promise. They also appreciated the hours, days and nights he had spent walking the city streets – not to mention his novel viewpoints: an amphibian aircraft, a crowded bus, a car and even a motorbike. But they could not condone his appalling technique. As Robert Hutchins accurately summed up: 'Mr Baigent could be too important a photographer not to learn photography. We need his kind of vision.'² If the young photographer was unprepared for his peers' stinging criticism, it did not take him long to realise the validity of their arguments. In teaching himself photography, he had neglected important aspects of craft. His concept of quality was based on reproductions in *Esquire*, *Popular Photography* and *Sight and Sound* and his main influences included Ed Feingersh, William Klein and Bruce Davidson, who all produced contrasty, large-grained images so typical of the 35 mm 'available light' boom of the 1950's.

With his book and a 40-print exhibition at the New Vision Gallery behind him, Baigent was glad to revive his New Zealand book project. His progress throughout 1968 to 1970 was often slow and difficult. His Bohemian existence, sustained by periods of commercial diving for seafoods: crayfish, mussels, paua and sea-eggs, sometimes left him without a camera for several months until he could afford the cost of repairs. Having lived in remote places without electricity for much of the time, he has, in fact, only recently been able to print his negatives from that period. Consistently biographical in the sense of a visual diary, Baigent's photographs recapture his lifestyle and concerns of the time. The city and the

country equally claimed his attention. Old and new friends shared his life in Auckland's Herne Bay, Newton and Grafton, as well as historic Russell and remote Rawhiti in the Bay of Islands. The people in Baigent's photographs are seldom strangers since his eyes were opened to the wealth of everyday activities several years ago by a favourite book: David Douglas Duncan's *The Private World of Pablo Picasso*.

John Szarkowski summed up Baigent's best photographs of the late '60s when he said they were good 'not because they are perfect but because they are worthy of contemplation and have the life juices in them'.³

Looking at Gary Baigent's new work, one is conscious not so much of a change in direction as a change in technique and application. Instead of his customary 35 mm camera, he is now working with the larger 2¼ square format of the Hasselblad which imposes its own kind of visual discipline. His current, and most challenging project to date, represented by one photograph in this exhibition (Catalogue No. 25) is to photograph all kinds of New Zealanders at work - a highly appropriate personal assignment for a photographer who has always worked to celebrate life, not art.

J.B.T.

1 *Eve* magazine, December 1966, p. 55.

2 *Auckland Star*, 15 October 1967.

3 Letter to J. B. Turner, 2 March 1970.

One-man Exhibition:

1967 New Vision Gallery, Auckland.

Group Exhibitions:

1967 'Four Auckland Photographers', Vulcan Gallery, Auckland.

1972 Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland.

1973 'Three New Zealand Photographers', Auckland City Art Gallery.

Published:

1967 *The Unseen City*, Blackwood and Janet Paul/Tri Ocean, Auckland/San Francisco.

1968 *Playdate* No. 133, September, Auckland.

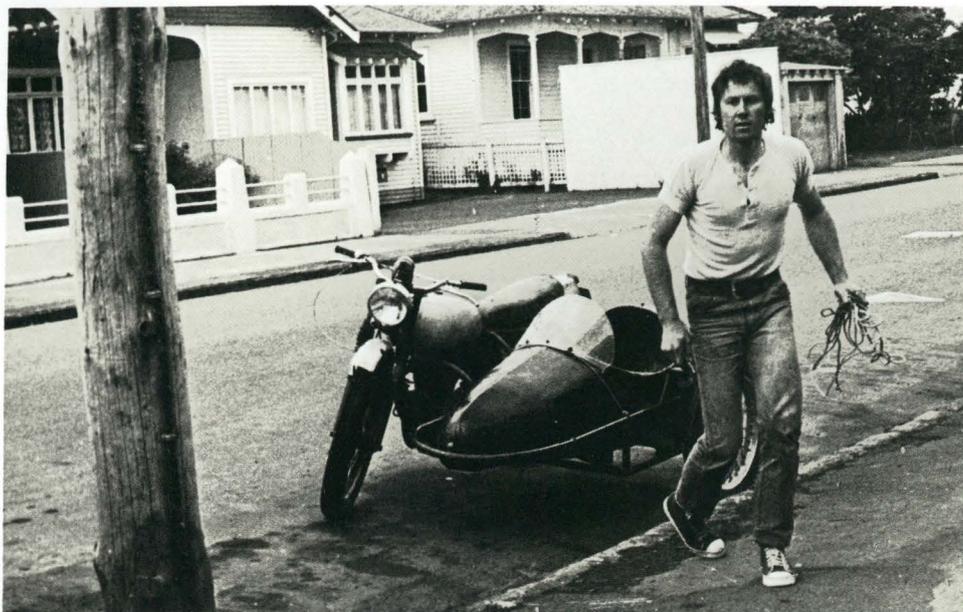
1969 *Playdate*, No. 137, February, Auckland.

1970 *New Zealand Studio*, Winter, Vol. 6, No. 2, Wellington.

1970 *Photography, A Visual Dialect: 10 Contemporary N.Z. Photographers*, edited by John Fields, Auckland.

1971 *New Zealand Photography*, No. 7, Oct.-Nov., Wellington.

1972 *New Zealand Photography*, No. 12, Sept.-Oct., Wellington.



Gary Baigent, Park Ave, Auckland 1970

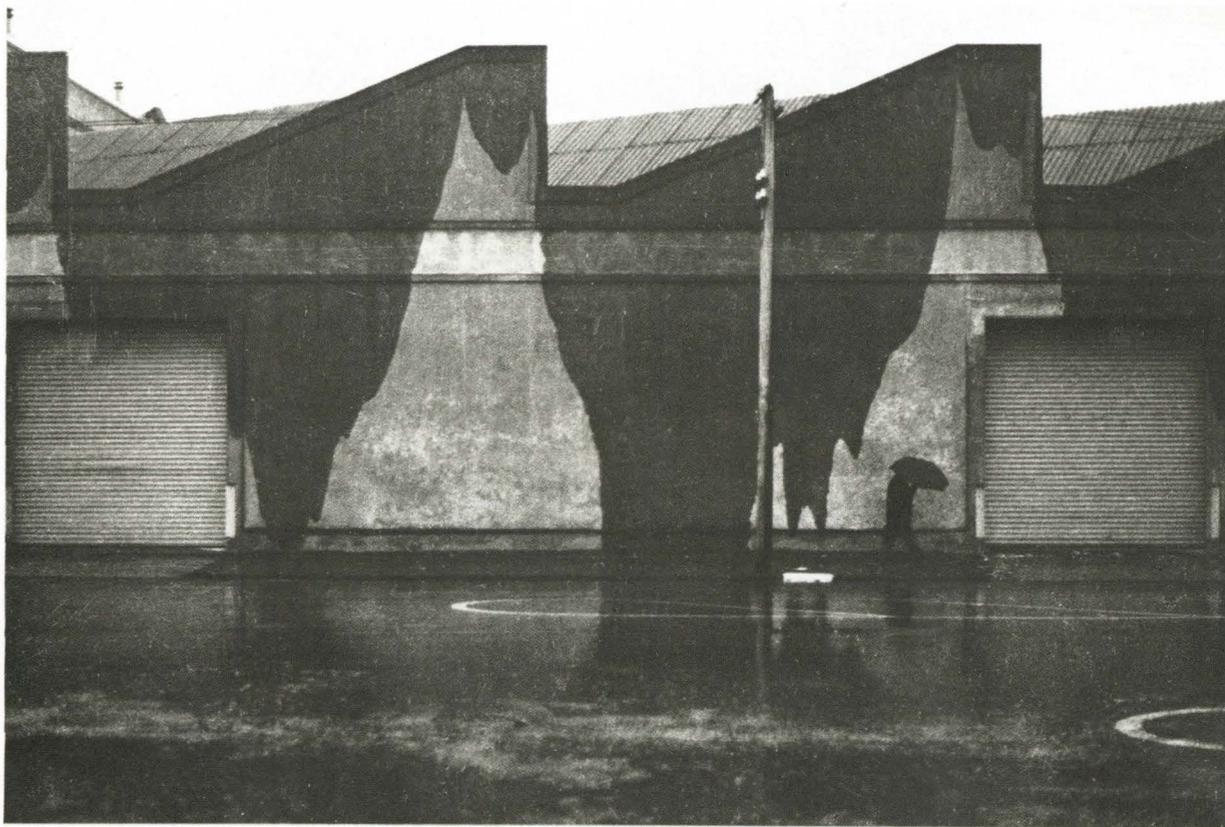
Photograph by Leonie Batchelor

GARY BAIGENT

- 1 Milkbar, Greys Avenue, Auckland, 1963
- 2 The Strand, Parnell, Auckland, 1964
- 3 Demolition, Wellesley Street, Auckland, 1964
- 4 Party, Brighton Road, Parnell, Auckland, 1964
- 5 Pigeon, Parnell, Auckland, 1965
- 6 Wakapuaka, Nelson, 1966
- 7 Tom Bowling Bay, North Cape, 1966
- 8 Tomtit, Taipo Valley, Westland, 1967
- 9 Zeke, Portland Road, Remuera, 1967
- 10 Newsboy and Drunk, Wellington, 1967
- 11 Brian Coker, Portland Road, Remuera, Auckland, 1967
- 12 John Gillespie, Wellington, 1967
- 13 Chris Doudney, off Little Barrier Island, 1967
- 14 Chris Doudney, off Little Barrier Island, 1967
- 15 Johnny Hermann's Smile, Auckland, 1968
- 16 Chris Strewé, Auckland Waterfront, 1968
- 17 Jimmy Keogh and Dalmation, Auckland, 1968
- 18 Clinton, Herne Bay, Auckland, 1969
- 19 Night Catch, Cavalli Islands, Northland, 1969
- 20 Leonie Park Avenue, Grafton, Auckland, 1970
- 21 Grafton, Bridge, Auckland, 1970
- 22 'Christian Spiritualist', Newton, Auckland, 1970
- 23 Don Gifford, Hokianga, 1970
- 24 Whetu and Cow, Maunganui Bluff, Northland, 1970
- 25 Newmarket Railway Station, Auckland, 1972



1 Milkbar, Greys Avenue, Auckland, 1963



2 The Strand, Parnell, Auckland, 1964



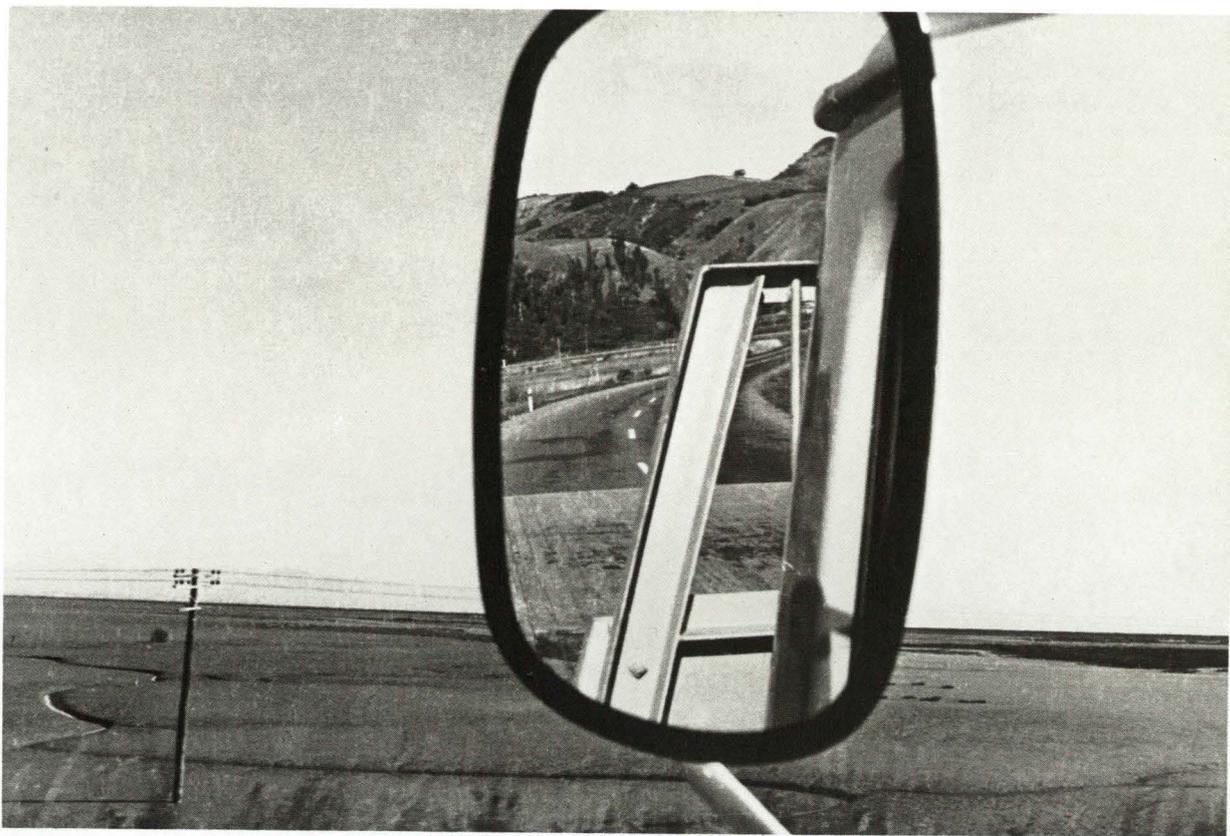
3 Demolition, Wellesley Street, Auckland, 1964



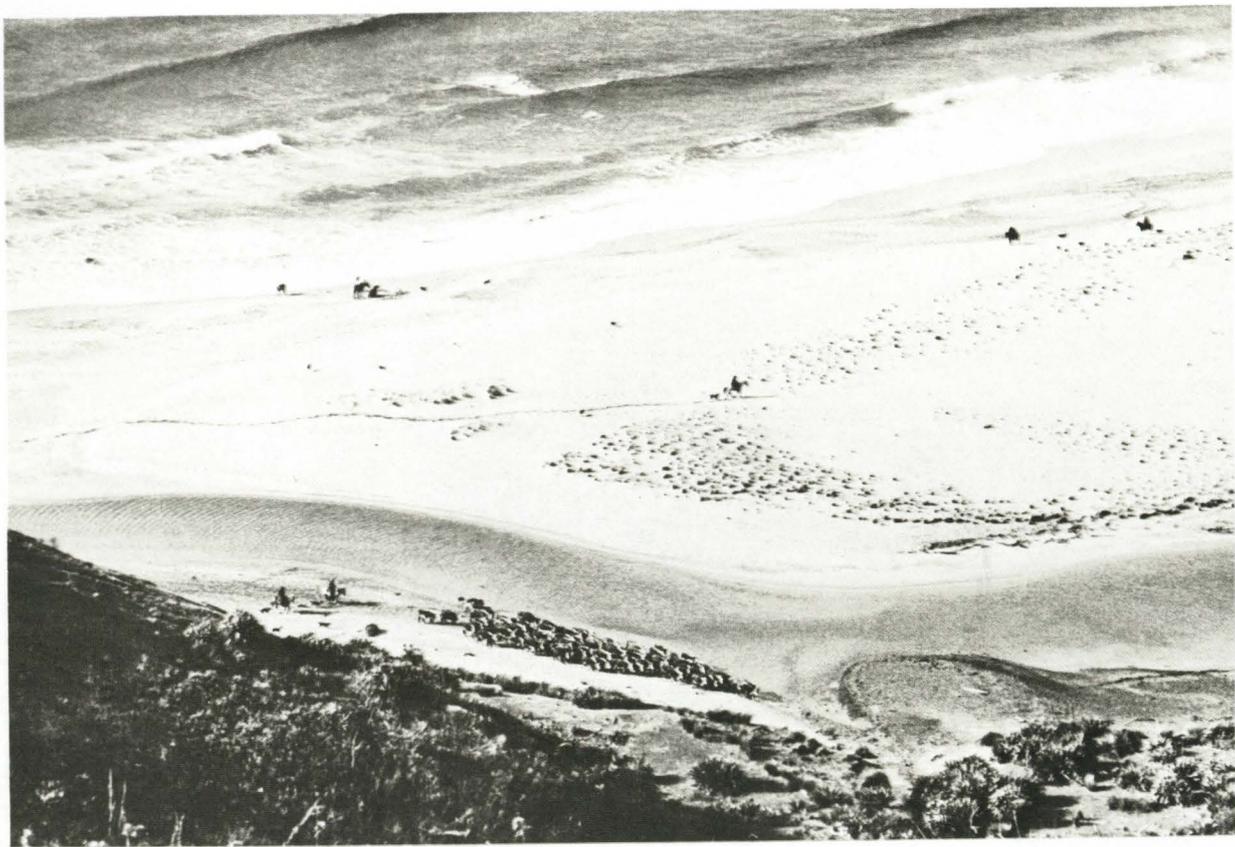
4 Party, Brighton Road, Parnell, Auckland, 1964



5 Pigeon, Parnell, Auckland, 1965



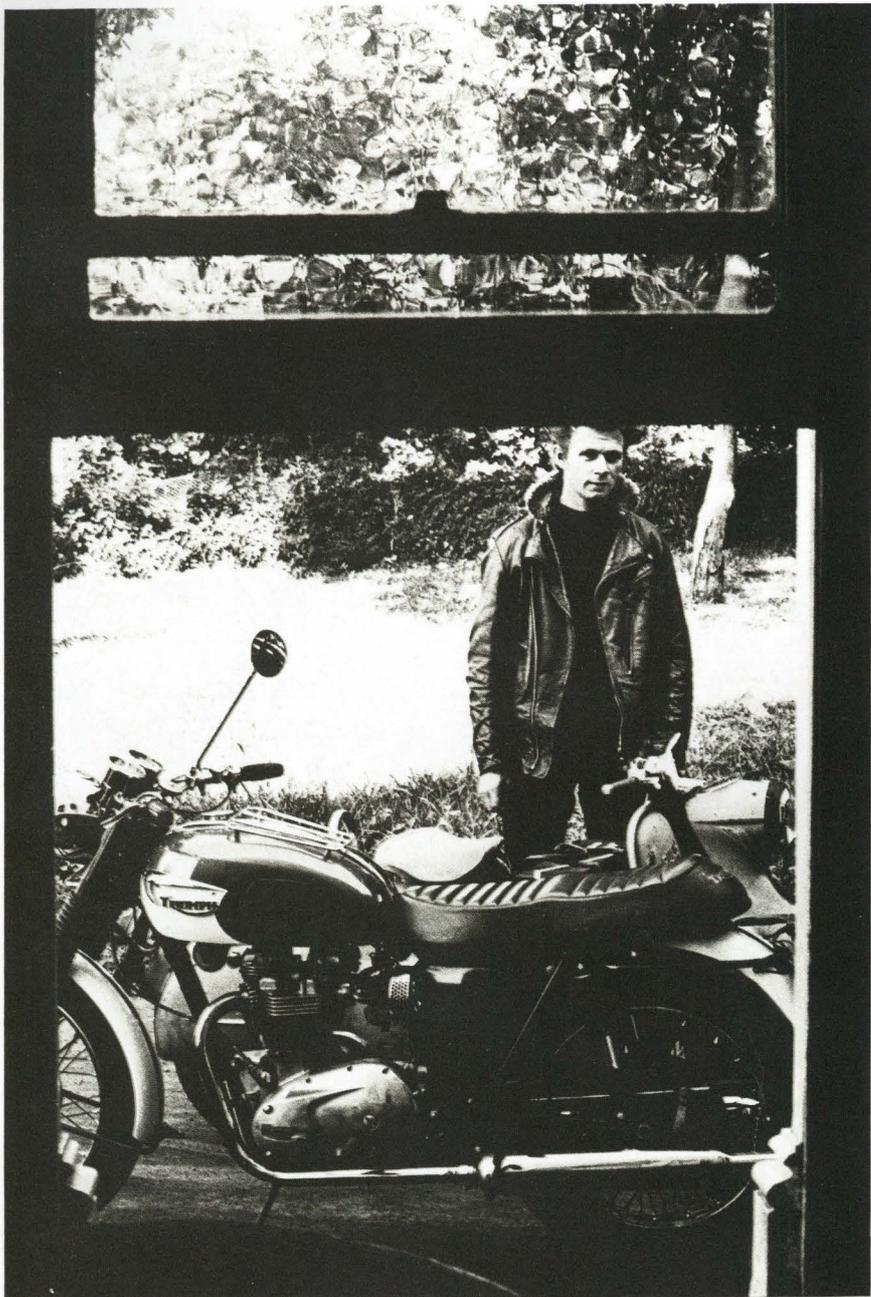
6 Wakapuaka, Nelson, 1966



7 Tom Bowling Bay, North Cape, 1966



8 Tomtit, Taipo Valley, Westland, 1967



9 Zeke, Portland Road, Remuera, 1967



10 Newsboy and Drunk, Wellington, 1967



11 Brian Coker, Portland Road, Remuera, Auckland, 1967



12 John Gillespie, Wellington, 1967



13 Chris Doudney, off Little Barrier Island, 1967



14 Chris Doudney, off Little Barrier Island, 1967



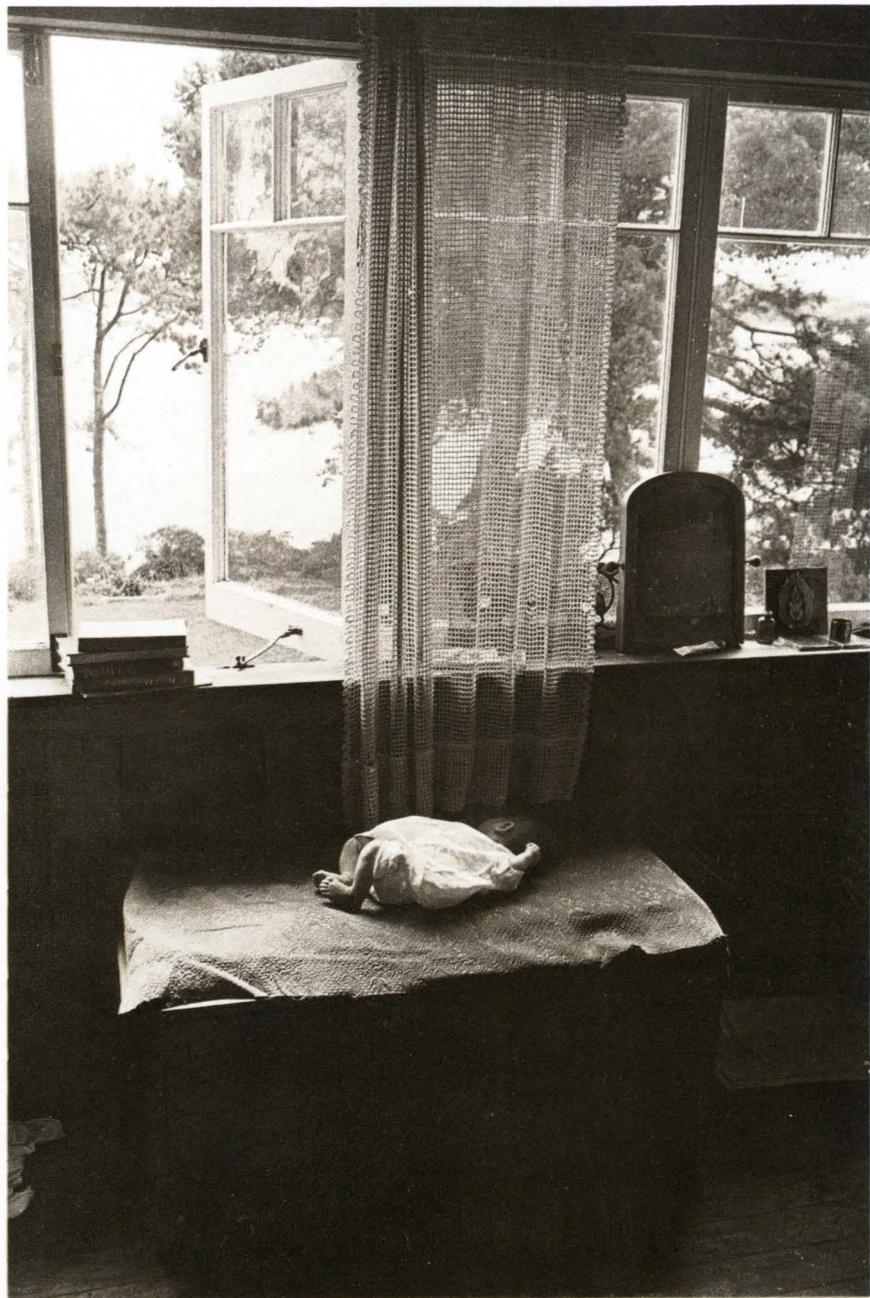
15 Johnny Hermann's Smile, Auckland, 1968



16 Chris Strewe, Auckland Waterfront, 1968



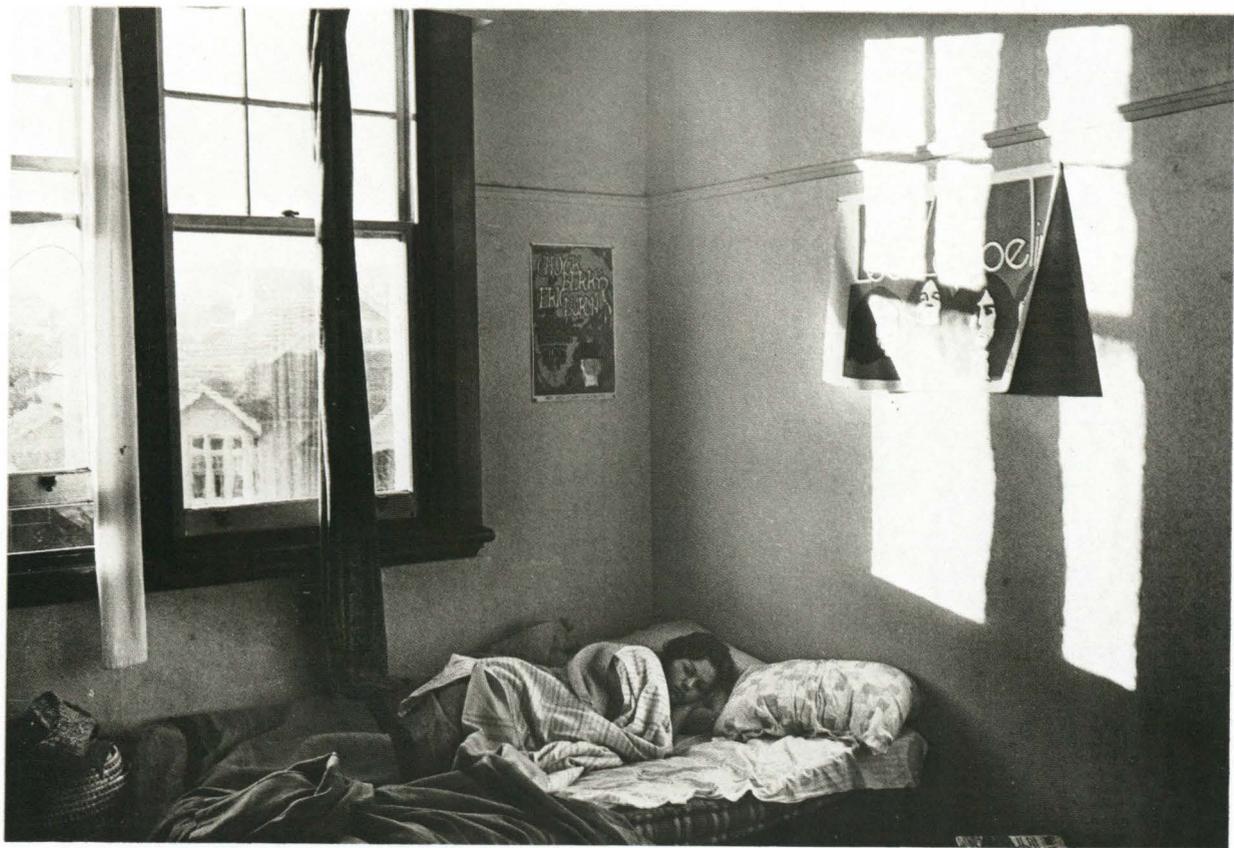
17 Jimmy Keogh and Dalmatian, Auckland, 1968



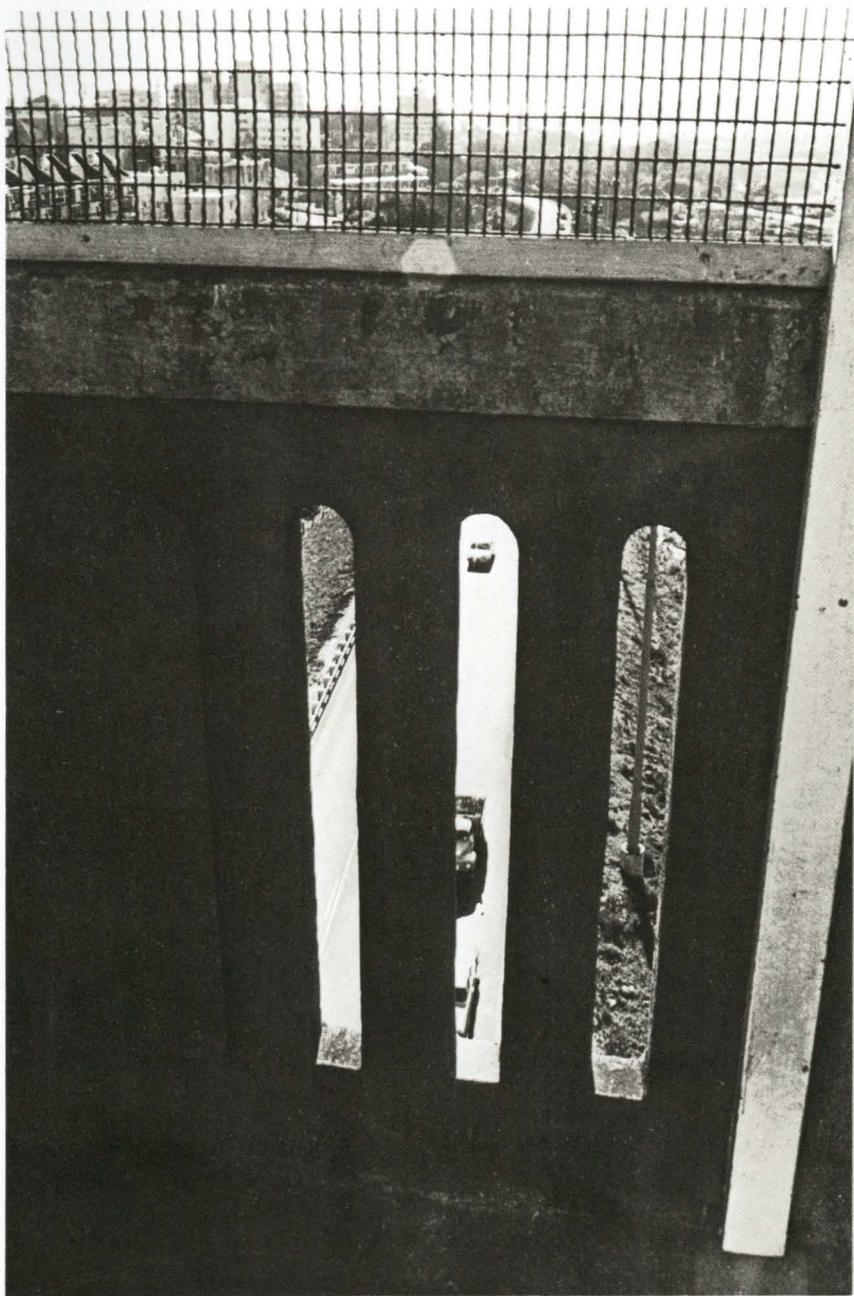
18 Clinton, Herne Bay, Auckland, 1969



19 Night Catch, Cavalli Islands, Northland, 1969



20 Leonie, Park Avenue, Grafton, Auckland, 1970



21 Grafton Bridge, Auckland, 1970



22 'Christian Spiritualist', Newton, Auckland, 1970





24 Whetu and Cow, Maunganui Bluff, Northland, 1970



25 Newmarket Railway Station, Auckland, 1972

RICHARD COLLINS

Richard Collins was born in Wellington in 1941, shortly before his family moved to Christchurch. He was educated at Christ's College and later commenced training as an architect. He moved north to resume study at the University of Auckland, from which he graduated with a Diploma of Architecture in 1964.

Although he had owned a camera from the age of 13, it was not until he returned from a holiday in Australia at the end of 1965 that he became involved in photography. He mixed with the same student group as Gary Baigent but they did not talk about photography until Baigent became excited by some of Collins' new Australian photographs. Baigent taught him how to make his first prints and shared his enlarging gear for further work.

Collins, self-contained and taciturn, had long been a keen observer of people and natural things. Always keen to record his observations, as a youth he had been caned for drawing in his school books during class. He welcomed the camera as a new, more spontaneous means of recording the things which interested him. If some of his photographs in the *Four Auckland Photographers* exhibition of December 1967 showed 'little insight or impact', as Robert Hutchins noted, it was not too long before Collins' photographs became a fitting complement to the exquisite drawings he habitually makes for his own enjoyment.'

Richard Collins has brought many untraceable influences to his work in photography. He has wide-ranging interests in music, fine arts, literature and movies, as well as Zen and other eastern philosophies. He breeds pigeons and has always been fascinated by natural history subjects. His interest in architecture has always gone beyond the job which he recently left in order to design and build his own house at Pakiri, on Auckland's north shore coastline. These interests, more than photography as such, have influenced his style – his vision of the world we live in. To him, as he says, 'Life is like music – each day, each performance is different.'

The work of a few photographers, however, did

influence his early development: namely Cartier-Bresson and J. H. Lartigue, along with Lee Friedlander and Burk Uzzle, among the most influential younger photographers to emerge in the 60's. Collins' early work shows both of these influences at work. The two Auckland pictures, (Catalogue Nos 26 and 29) for instance, show the kind of direct, respectfully unobtrusive observation which is the basis of Cartier-Bresson's approach. But one can see in Collins' other photographs like *Pukekohe*, 1968 (Catalogue No. 28) and *Pakiri*, 1969 (Catalogue No.32) a much more deliberate picture-making concern which suggests the influence at that time of Friedlander and Uzzle.

To concentrate on photography, Collins left his architectural job about July 1969 when he began a tour of the North and South Islands with his wife and daughter. While visiting John Turner in Wellington he saw an original Edward Weston photograph and several gravures by Paul Strand which deeply affected him. The exquisite quality of the classic large-format pictures seemed just what he was looking for in his own work.

Unable to buy a suitable 8 x 10 inch camera anywhere in New Zealand, he borrowed an old Thornton-Pickard view camera with a 5 x 4 inch back, with which he used a lens borrowed from John Fields who had himself just moved up to larger format work. Compared to the ease of operation of the 35 mm camera, Collins found it an enormous battle to make good pictures with the big camera, but the effort seemed to make every picture doubly important.

Collins resumed his architectural position in July 1970. Throughout that year and the next he continued to work – when time and circumstances permitted – with a new 5 x 4 camera in preference to 35 mm. It was a period of quiet experimentation and re-evaluation during which he produced many fine photographs in a more objective, more naturally contemplative style, which let the subject speak for itself without the intrusion of the photographer. He rediscovered the work of Cartier-Bresson, and in doing so, again realised the possibilities of 35 mm work – especially with the light-weight, versatile rangefinder Leica, the viewfinder of which, compared to the ground-

glass screens of both the view camera and the single-lens-reflex, minimised rather than accentuated the sense of picture-making.

Much to his surprise, early in 1972, he found that the small camera could yield the quality he sought if he printed his negatives on less contrasty enlarging paper than he was accustomed to. He also discovered that he could then produce almost exactly the kind of result he had thought was only possible with the 5 x 4. The new prints were so fine, and the 35 mm system so suitable to his needs, that it became pointless to continue working with the view camera. He had found, and has since refined, a technique entirely appropriate to his way of seeing.

More than ever before, his recent photographs show his profound respect for the simple and natural everyday things which seem like magic to him.

As Robert Hutchins so aptly put it: Richard Collins' new prints 'speak in almost a whisper of the love and beauty their images hold for the photographer' - images which say "This is beautiful, it is infinitely precious, to be retained for all time"²

J.B.T.

Group Exhibitions:

- 1967 'Four Auckland Photographers', Vulcan Gallery, Auckland.
- 1971 'Photography '71', Waikato Art Gallery, Hamilton.
- 1972 Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland.
- 1973 'Three New Zealand Photographers', Auckland City Art Gallery.

Collection: Waikato Art Gallery.

Published:

- 1970 *Landfall* 94, June, Vol. 24, No. 2, Christchurch.
- 1970 *New Zealand Studio*, Winter, Vol. 6, No. 2, Wellington.
- 1970 *Photography, A Visual Dialect: 10 Contemporary N.Z. Photographers*, edited by John Fields, Auckland.
- 1971 *Waikato Art Gallery Bulletin* No. 3, Hamilton.
- 1971 *New Zealand Photography*, No. 5, May-June, Wellington.
- 1972 *New Zealand Photography*, No. 8, Jan.-Feb., Wellington.
- 1972 *New Zealand Photography*, No. 12, Sept.-Oct., Wellington.

¹ *Auckland Star*, 14 December, 1967. 'Four Auckland Photographers', exhibition review. The photographers were Gary Baigent, Richard Collins, Kim Goldwater and Jim Keogh.

² *New Zealand Photography*, No. 12, September/October 1972.



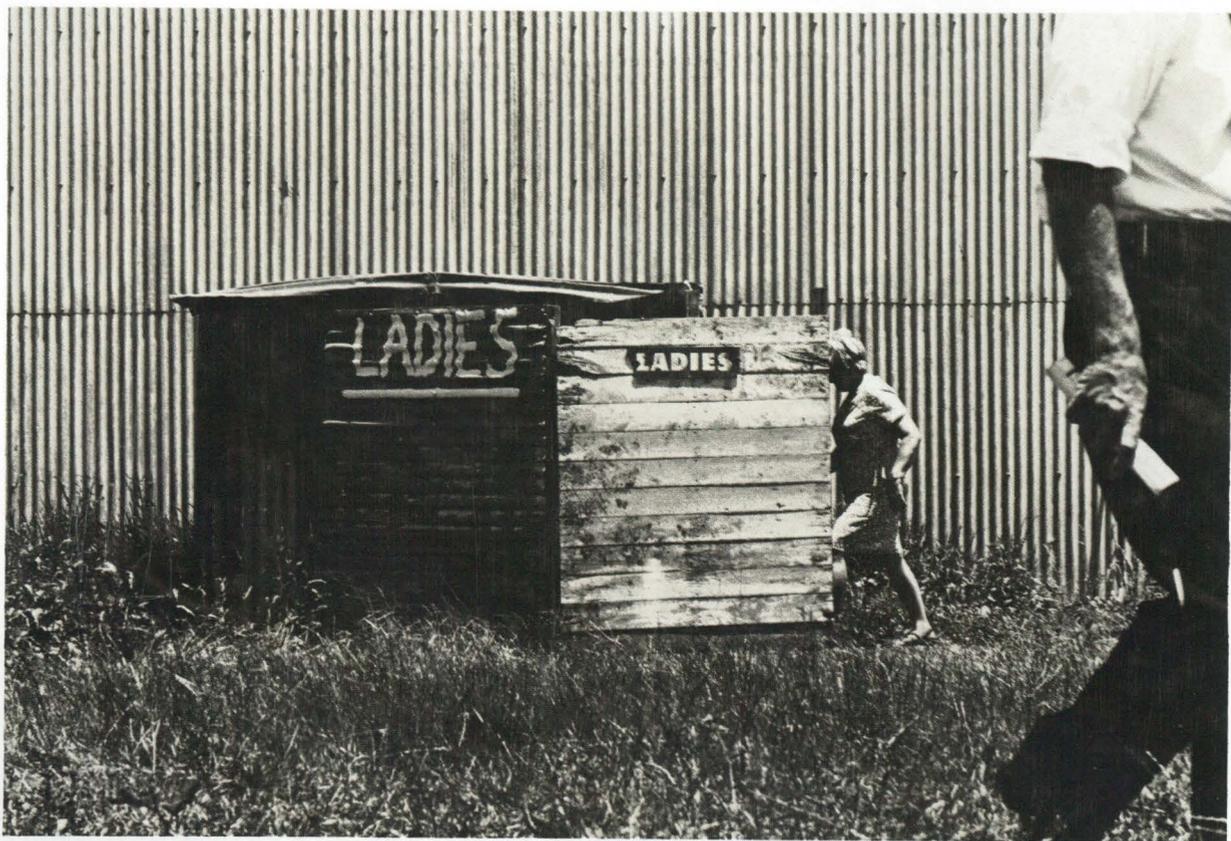
Richard Collins Photograph by John J. Fields 1969

RICHARD COLLINS

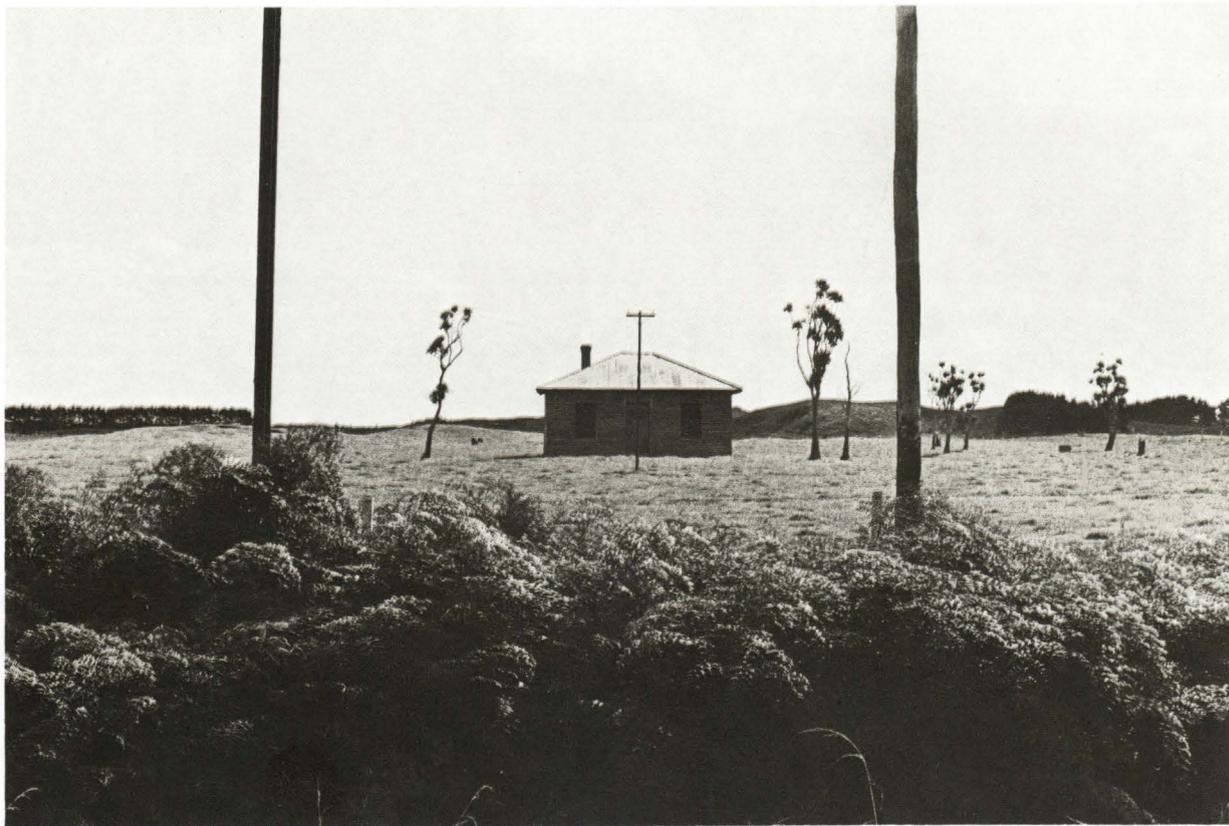
- 26 Auckland, 1967
- 27 Auckland, 1967
- 28 Pukekohe, Auckland, 1968
- 29 Auckland, 1969
- 30 Oroua Downs, Manawatu, 1969
- 31 Pakiri, Auckland, 1969
- 32 Pakiri, Auckland, 1969
- 33 Cane Chair, Auckland, 1969
- 34 Nasturtiums, Auckland, 1969
- 35 Silver Birch, Auckland, 1969
- 36 Moreton Bay Fig Tree, Auckland, 1970
- 37 Marlborough Sounds, 1970
- 38 Marie, Freemans Bay, Auckland, 1970
- 39 Jamie, Freemans Bay, Auckland, 1970
- 40 Car Tarpaulin, Freemans Bay, Auckland, 1970
- 41 Washing, Freemans Bay, Auckland, 1970
- 42 Facade, Auckland, 1971
- 43 Maori Meeting House, Manawatu, 1971
- 44 Mount Ngaurahoe, Tongariro National Park, 1971
- 45 Sand dune, Pakiri, Auckland, 1971
- 46 Tent, Great Barrier Island, 1971
- 47 Mr Ross, Laingholm, Auckland, 1971
- 48 Pakiri Store, Auckland, 1972
- 49 Franklin Road, Freemans Bay, Auckland, 1972
- 50 Herne Bay, Auckland, 1972









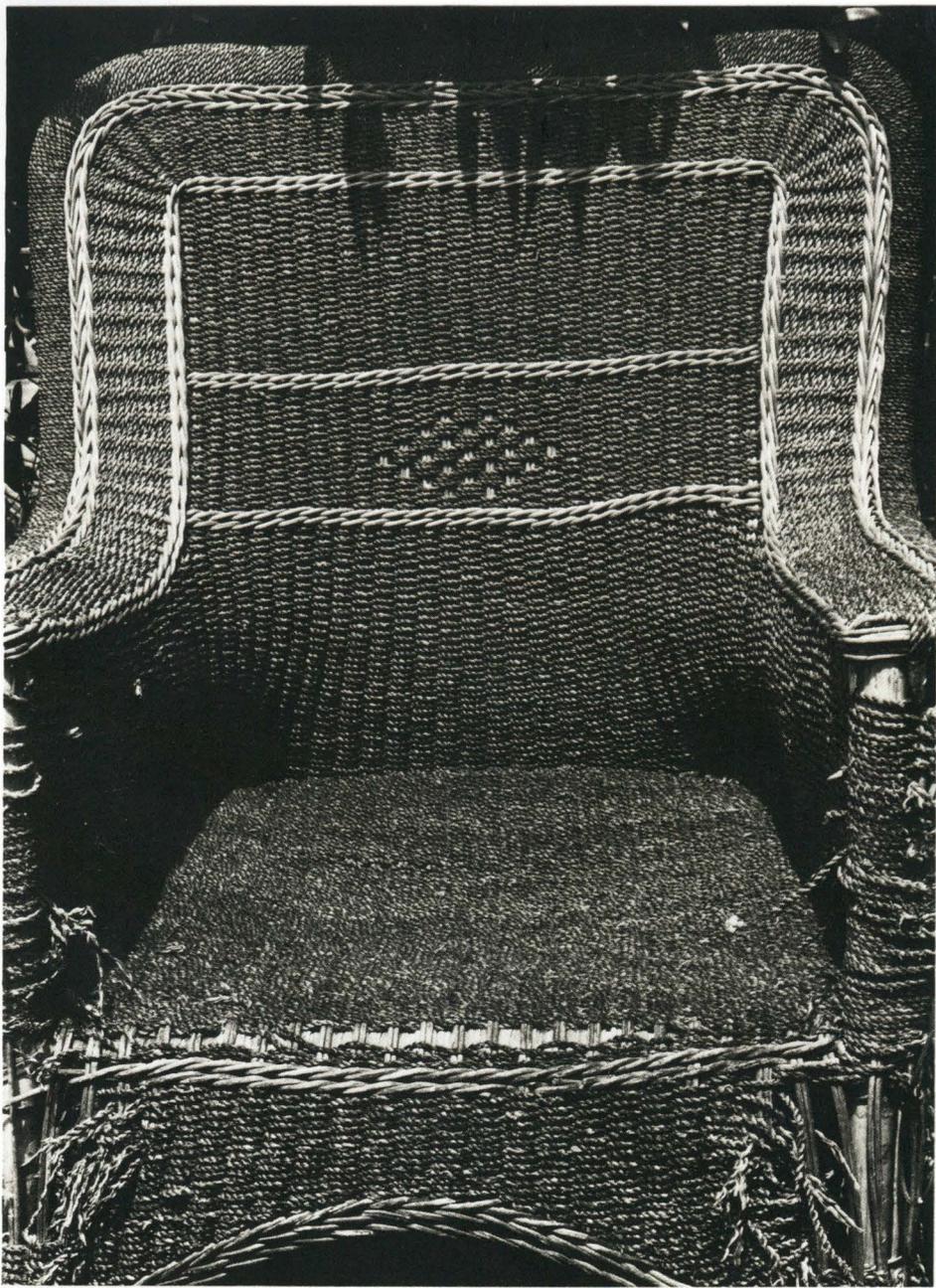


30 Oroua Downs, Manawatu, 1969



31 Pakiri, Auckland, 1969





33 Cane Chair, Auckland, 1969





35 Silver Birch, Auckland, 1969



36 Moreton Bay Fig Tree, Auckland, 1970

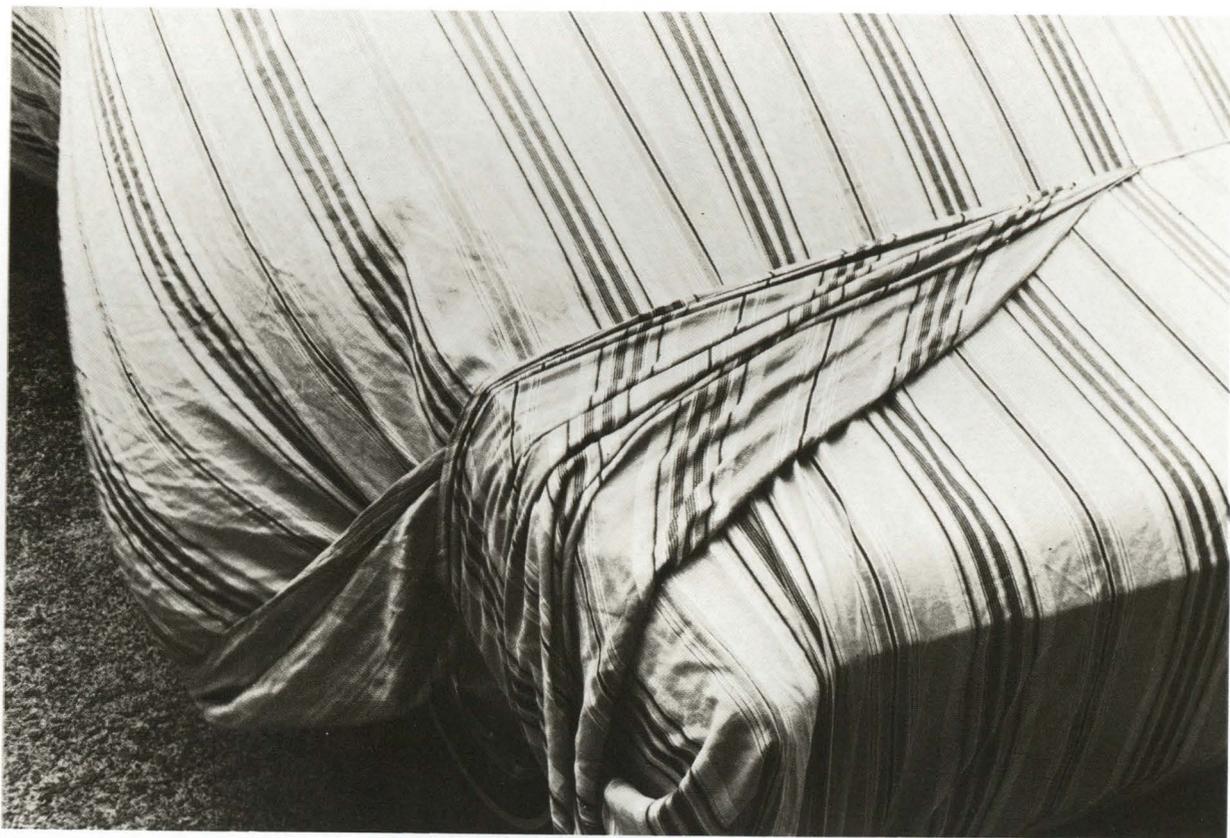




38 Marie, Freemans Bay, Auckland, 1970



39 Jamie, Freemans Bay, Auckland, 1970



40 Car Tarpaulin, Freemans Bay, Auckland, 1970



41 Washing, Freemans Bay, Auckland, 1970



42 Facade, Auckland, 1971



43 Maori Meeting House, Manawatu, 1971



44 Mount Ngaurahoe, Tongariro National Park, 1971



45 Sand dune, Pakiri, Auckland, 1971



46 Tent, Great Barrier Island, 1971



47 Mr Ross, Laingholm, Auckland, 1971



48 Pakiri Store, Auckland, 1972



49 Franklin Road, Freemans Bay, Auckland, 1972



50 Herne Bay, Auckland, 1972

JOHN FIELDS

John Fields was born in Gloucester, Massachusetts, U.S.A. in 1938 and educated in Rockport, a New England art colony. Guns, hunting and the sea were his youthful passions. On his seventeenth birthday, he volunteered for the U.S. Navy. He became an avid photographer while on duty in the Pacific and Far East a few years later.

When his Navy service ended in 1959, he hitchhiked all over the United States. Returning to Boston, he attended a course in colour photography at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where he was exhorted to 'Make pictures, don't just take them!' Thereafter he free-lanced as a photographer and gave a series of colour-slide lectures on 'Krossane - Cape of the Cross.'

An extension course in documentary and expeditionary filming under Robert Gardener (then in the process of editing *Dead Birds*), and a film production course at Boston University in 1963, left Fields frustrated with free-lance photography. He saw himself being crushed by commercialism and resented depreciating a medium which was becoming increasingly precious to him. A turning point came soon after, when he saw some photographs by Harry Callahan at the Carl Siembab Gallery in Boston. Astonished by the strong individuality and beauty of Callahan's work, Fields decided from then on to keep his personal work entirely separate from any commercial work.

In 1965 he joined the Massachusetts General Hospital as a photographer in electron microscopy and there, soon after, had his first exhibition of personal work. His main aim then was to 'record and portray a pre-conceived mood' in his photographs. A year later he prepared an exhibition of 19 'rare' photographs of the Cape Anne area. The 'rarity' was twofold: the subjects were disappearing landmarks, such as an ancient lighthouse which was destroyed by fire, and further because he then treated each photograph like an original painting. He made only one print for exhibition, charged high prices, and would not permit reproductions of his work. Later, enlarged and titled the *Garden of Man*, his

exhibition toured the north-eastern states for two years.

John Fields came to New Zealand in October 1966 to assist a leading cell biologist from the Massachusetts General Hospital with further research at the University of Auckland. Fields was shocked to find himself in what he described as a 'cultural vacuum' in New Zealand. It was the beginning of a vital unwinding process which greatly affected his ideas on photography and art. Propitiously, *The Photographer's Eye* exhibition arrived in 1967. The great variety of pictures and particularly the picture-making concerns elucidated by John Szarkowski, forced Fields to further reconsider his American photographic experience.

It was shortly after that exhibition that Fields met Gary Baigent. Although he was strongly critical of Baigent's work, they became good friends, with Fields trading technical expertise for local lore. Baigent also introduced him to other photographers, including John Turner from Wellington, who became a critical sounding board for Fields, and in turn introduced him to other young photographers to help fill the 'vacuum'.

In May 1969, Fields discovered the Walker Evans classic *American Photographs*. But more than Evans' photographs of the thirties, with which he was already familiar, it was Lincoln Kerstein's essay which came as a revelation. It answered questions which had long puzzled him about his own work. The pictures made him realise that the quality of detail and realism he wanted in much of his work was unique to large-format photography, not the 35 mm system he had invariably relied upon. More important however, Kirstein's essay made Fields realise his basic misconceptions about the nature of his personal work, which he had previously divided into 'creative' and 'record' categories. His 'creative' photographs were largely all kinds of sunlit reflections, old barns, and other quaint rural or littoral subjects, captured with a deliberate picture-making motive. In contrast, he had felt that his more candid observations of man and his environment had value only as historic records, but were not creative, because

they were made without 'artistic' intent.

It was this basically pictorialist concept which Evans and Kerstein exploded by insisting that photography's main strength and purpose, even as art, was social: 'The facts of our homes and times, shown surgically, without the intrusion of the poet's or painter's comment or necessary distortion . . .'¹

Freed of past hesitations, Fields put even more energy into recording the aspects of both the city and countryside which had always interested him. In October 1969, his old 5 x 7 view camera, which he had used mainly for commercial colour work in the United States, arrived by air. For weekend after weekend he trudged around Auckland with the 40 lbs of view camera and accessories, and gained rather than lost his enthusiasm for each new image as it snapped into focus on the big ground-glass screen. His photographs seemed so 'straight', that he sometimes wondered if his reasoning was off.

John Fields early became convinced that the crux of Man's dilemma, Man's seeming bent for self-destruction, lay in his divorce from nature. Fields has always loved the rural life of much of his boyhood, but has circumstantially spent most of his adult life in cities, which always 'scratch him up the wrong way'. It is no wonder that so many of his city images are unnervingly ironical. And it is no coincidence that when he does escape into the countryside, he brings back a silo as a rocket ship, a bulldozer as a saint, and a 'USS Enterprise' anchored in a small stream beneath a threatening sky. Should we enjoy them as a wry joke, or heed them as a warning?

J.B.T.

¹ *American Photographs*. Walker Evans and Lincoln Kerstein. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1938.

One-man Exhibitions:

- 1966 Baldwin Wallace College, Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A. (Exhibition toured mid-western states, 1966-68).
- 1969 'Garden of Man', Washburn Gallery, Boston Museum of Science, Mass U.S.A. (Exhibition toured north-eastern states, 1969-70).
- 1972 Carl Siembab Gallery, Boston, Mass., U.S.A.

Group Exhibitions:

- 1971 'Photography '71', Waikato Art Gallery, Hamilton.
- 1972 Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland.
- 1973 'Three New Zealand Photographers', Auckland City Art Gallery.

Collection: Waikato Art Gallery.

Published:

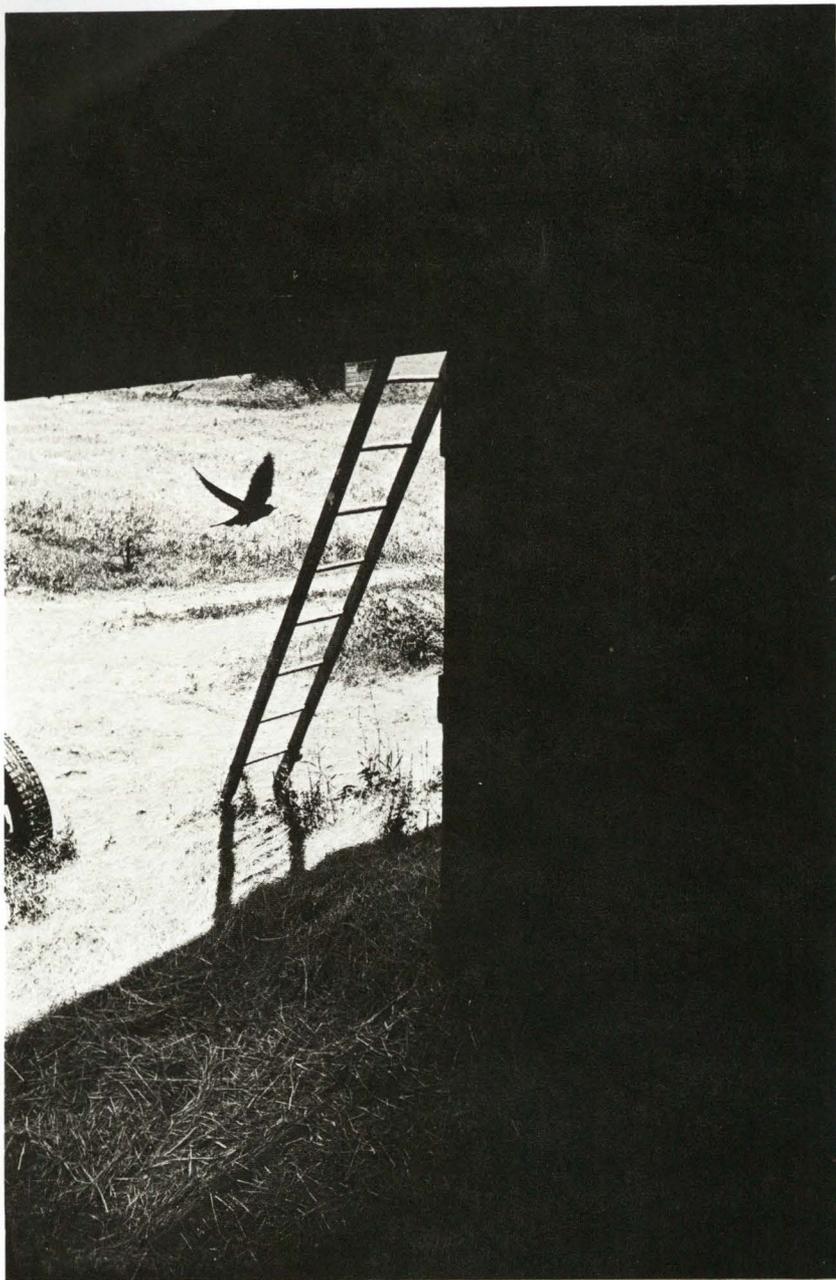
- 1963 *The Schooner 'Eva S. Cullison'*, with poem and narrative by Michael Parillo, Gloucester, Mass., U.S.A.
- 1970 *Landfall* 94, June, Vol. 24, No. 2, Christchurch.
- 1970 *New Zealand Studio*, Winter, Vol. 16, No. 2, Wellington.
- 1970 *Photography, A Visual Dialect: 10 Contemporary N.Z. Photographers*, edited by John Fields, Auckland.
- 1971 *New Zealand Photography*, No. 5, May-June, Wellington.
- 1971 *New Zealand Photography*, No. 6, July-August, Wellington.
- 1971 *Waikato Art Gallery Bulletin* No. 3, Hamilton.
- 1972 *New Zealand Photography*, No. 12, Sept.-Oct., Wellington.



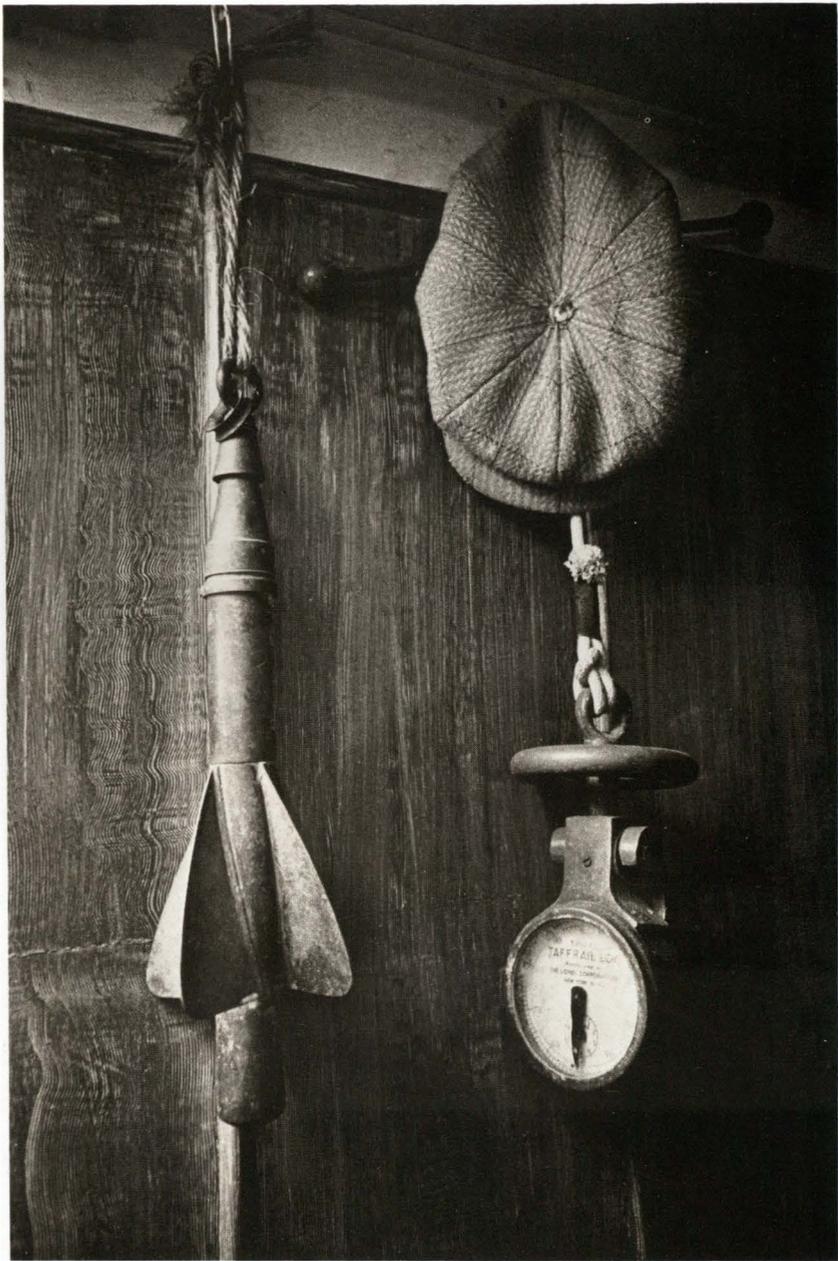
John Fields Photograph by John B. Turner 1969

JOHN FIELDS

- 51 Barn Swallow, Wilson's Farm, Essex, Massachusetts, U.S.A., 1964
- 52 Taffrail Log and Cap, Schooner 'L.A. Dunton', Mystic Seaport, Connecticut, U.S.A., 1965
- 53 Chimneys, Onehunga, Auckland, 1968
- 54 Traffic Officers and Couple, Auckland, 1969
- 55 Bed, Union Street, Auckland, 1969
- 56 Fireplace, Stove and Pot, Union Street, Auckland, 1969
- 57 Volcanic Plateau, Tongariro National Park, 1969
- 58 Rear of Magistrate's Court, Auckland, 1969
- 59 Flats and Couple, Panmure, Auckland, 1969
- 60 School Bus and Garage, Coromandel, 1969
- 61 Grafton Cemetary, Auckland, 1969
- 62 Father and Daughter, East Cape, 1969
- 63 'Quality Used Cars', New North Road, Auckland, 1969
- 64 Haystack, Kingseat, Auckland, 1969
- 65 Showgrounds, Auckland, 1969
- 66 Agapanthas, Sandringham, Auckland, 1969
- 67 Helvi, Mount Eden, Auckland, 1970
- 68 Silos, Route 12, near Paparoa, Northland, 1970
- 69 Grass, Orakei Basin, Auckland, 1970
- 70 'The Saint', Route 12 near Maungaturoto, Northland, 1970
- 71 'U.S.S. Enterprise', near Thames, 1970
- 72 Wash House, Horoeke Avenue, Mount Eden, Auckland, 1970
- 73 Fijian, Milne and Choyce's Store, Auckland, 1970
- 74 Amodeo Beach, Coromandel Peninsula, 1970
- 75 Storm over Whitianga, 1971



51 Barn Swallow, Wilson's Farm, Essex, Massachusetts, U.S.A., 1964



52 Taffrail Log and Cap, Schooner 'L.A. Dunton', Mystic Seaport, Connecticut, U.S.A., 1965



53 Chimneys, Onehunga, Auckland, 1968



54 Traffic Officers and Couple, Auckland, 1969



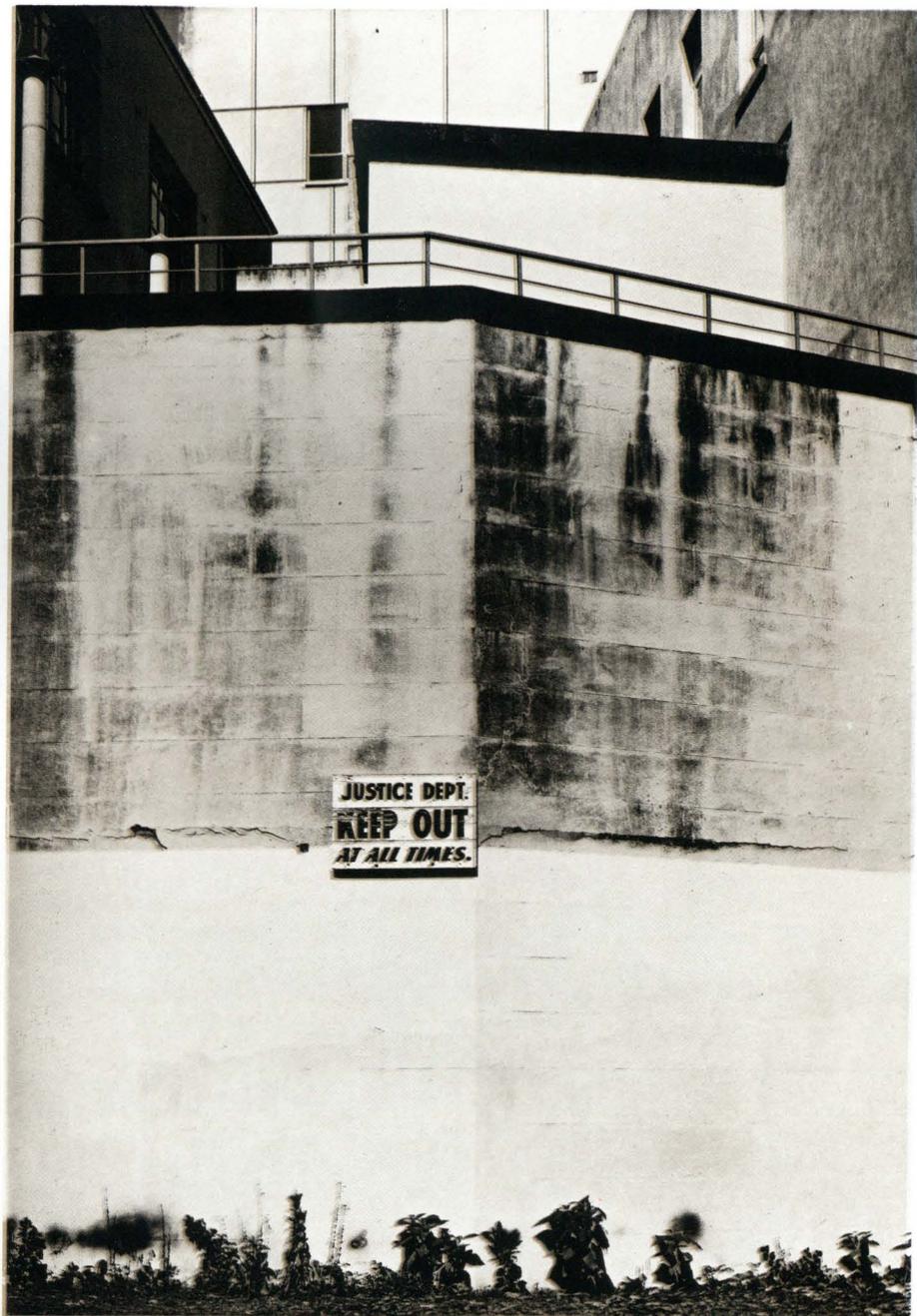
55 Bed, Union Street, Auckland, 1969



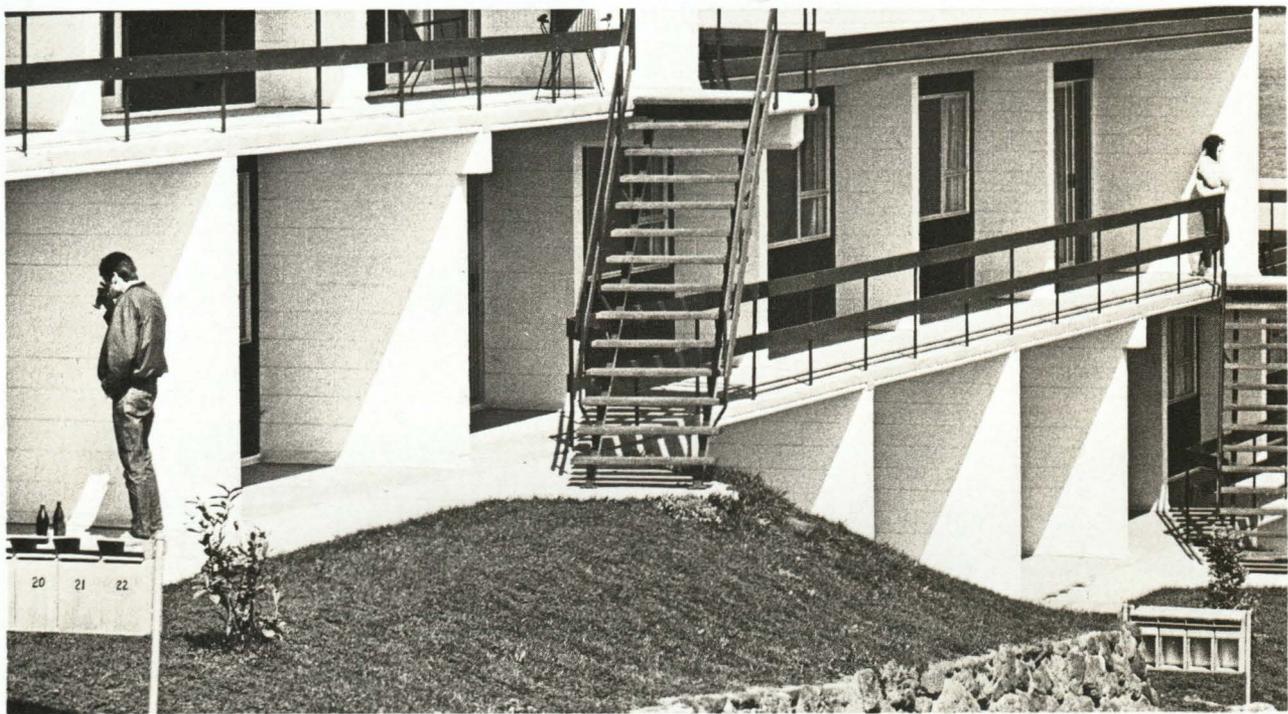
56 Fireplace, Stove and Pot, Union Street, Auckland, 1969



57 Volcanic Plateau, Tongariro National Park, 1969



58 Rear of Magistrate's Court, Auckland, 1969



59 Flats and Couple, Panmure, Auckland, 1969



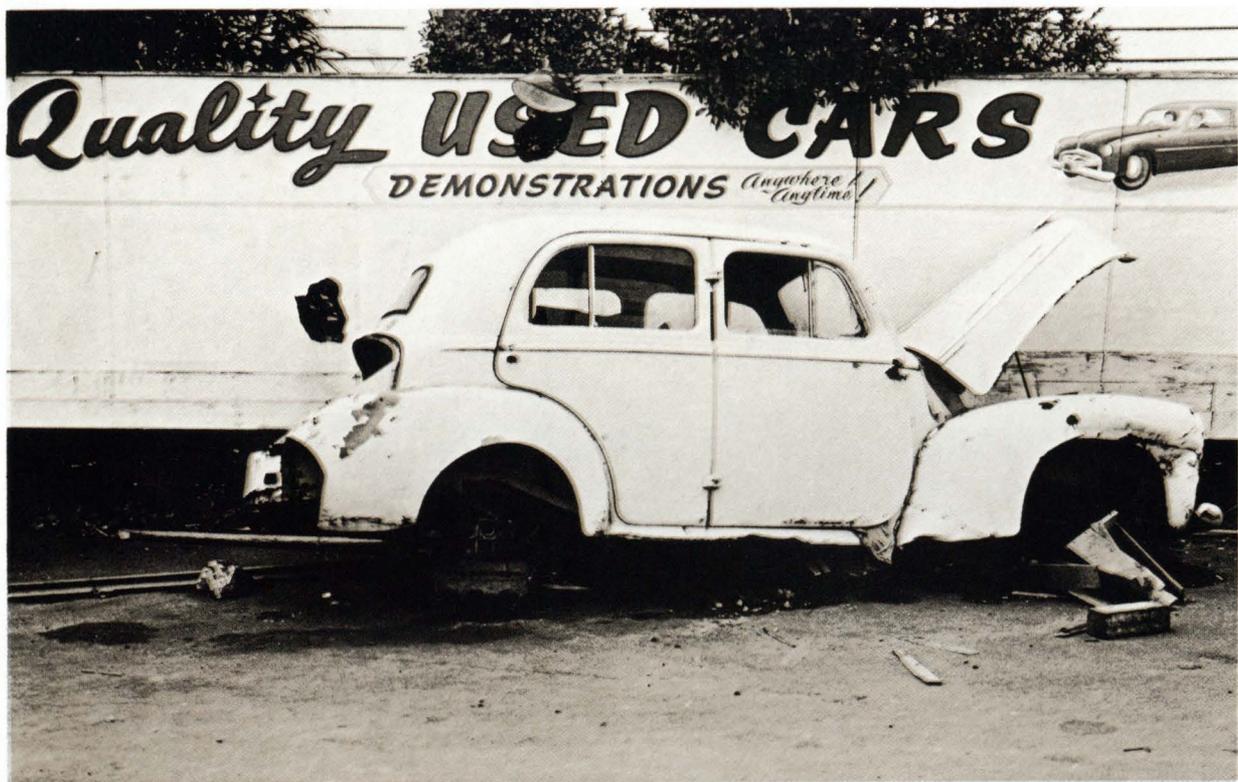
60 School Bus and Garage, Coromandel, 1969



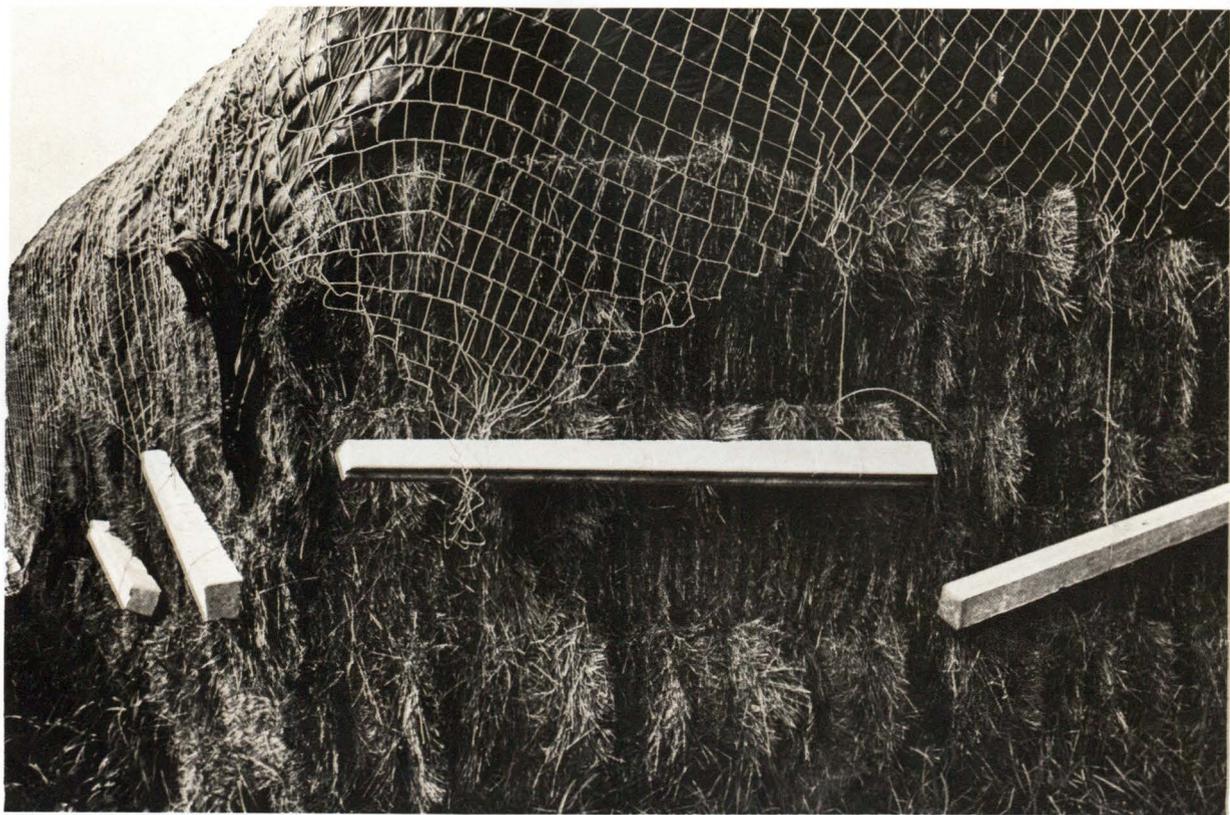
61 Grafton Cemetery, Auckland, 1969



62 Father and Daughter, East Cape, 1969



63 'Quality Used Cars', New North Road, Auckland, 1969



64 Haystack, Kingseat, Auckland, 1969





66 Agapanthas, Sandringham, Auckland, 1969



67 Helvi, Mount Eden, Auckland, 1970



68 Silos, Route 12, near Paparoa, Northland, 1970



69 Grass, Orakei Basin, Auckland, 1970



70 'The Saint', Route 12 near Maungaturoto, Northland, 1970



71 'U.S.S. Enterprise', near Thames, 1970



72 Wash House, Horoeke Avenue, Mount Eden, 1970



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