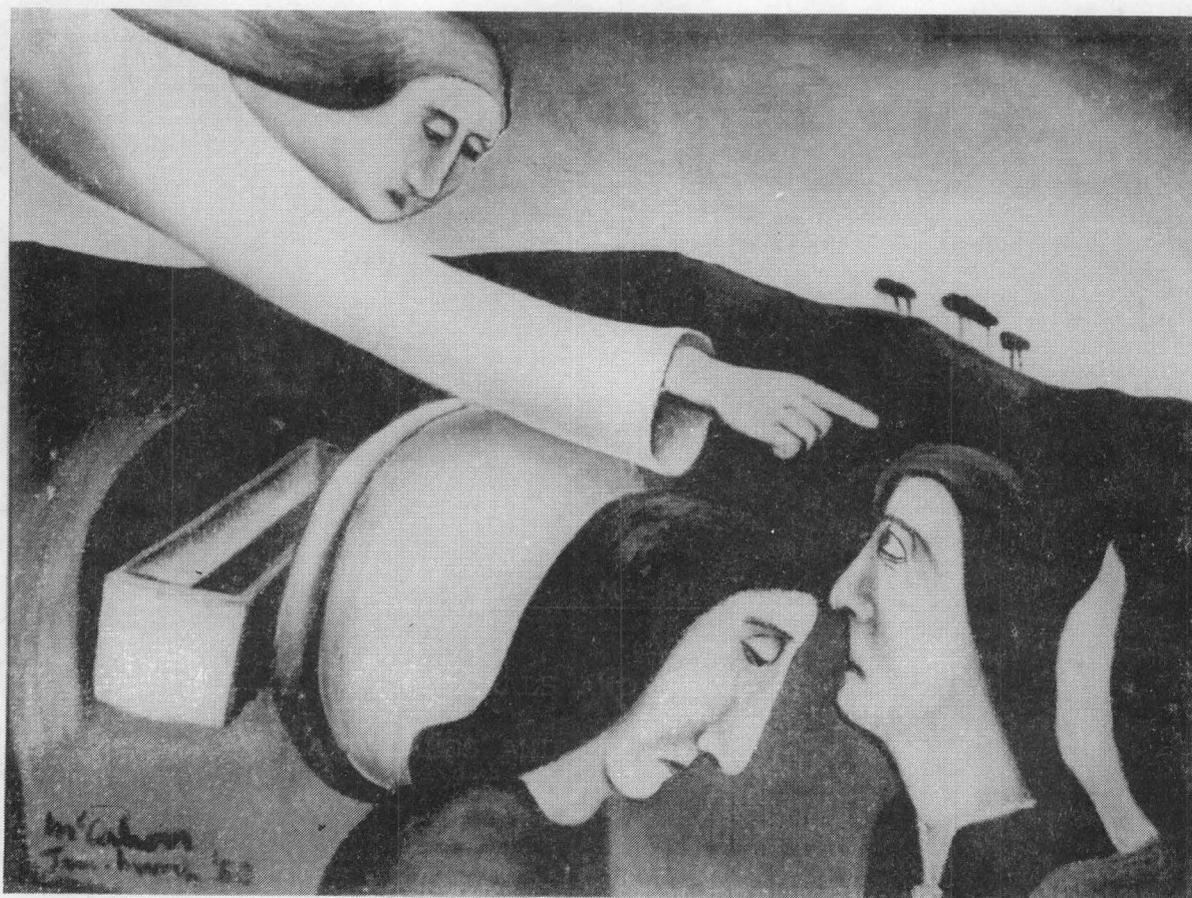


160.

COLIN MCCA HON

NUMERALS AND STATIONS
LANDSCAPES AND RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS

6 NOVEMBER - 4 DECEMBER 1978



Works on loan from the artist

Works from the A.C.A.G. Permanent Collection

All measurements in millimetres, height before width.
Unless otherwise stated, all works from the collection
of the artist.

1. The Entombment (after Titian), 1947
oil/cardboard, 521 x 647
Inscribed: McCahon May '47

2. Christ Taken from the Cross, 1947
oil/cardboard, 647 x 521
Inscribed: McCahon '47

3. The Angel of the Annunciation, 1947
oil/cardboard, 647 x 521
Inscribed: McCahon April '47

4. The Promised Land, 1948
oil/canvas, 915 x 1370
Inscribed: McCahon Feb. Aug '48

"...a dream painting of my life in Nelson - places
I loved, me, my hut and water and light and below
Farewell Spit, the end and beginning of it all."

(Artist 1974)

5. Takaka: Night and Day, 1948
oil/canvas, 889 x 2108
Inscribed: McCahon July '48
Presented by the Rutland Group, Auckland, 1958

"Takaka - night and day was painted in Christchurch
when I was staying in Doris Lusk's house. Because
the room in which it was painted was so small the
canvas had to be draped around three sides of the
room, and the room included my bed as well. Later
it was finished in the dining room where there was
more space. Except for the three large early Otago
peninsular landscapes, this was the largest painting
I had tackled up till then. As far as the general
idea goes it is linked with another painting This is
the Promised Land, except that this also shows my hut
in it. The picture is in memory of my Nelson days
although, in fact, it does not have a great deal to
do with the Takaka Valley which is full of trees;
mostly totara I think. The actual valley as I saw it
was like a geological diagram, only overlaid with trees
and farms. In my painting all this has been swept
aside in order to uncover the structure of the land.

Anne and I were given a copy of Professor C.A. Cotton's Geomorphology for a wedding present; this from a friend who had seen the Otago Peninsular landscape. Cotton's explicit and ordered drawing was, and still is, a very big influence in my work.

The picture was presented to the Gallery by the Rutland Group who had pooled their remaining funds to purchase this before they finally closed down. It was out of this group that my Auckland art classes grew."

(Artist 1969)

6. The Marys at the Tomb, 1950
oil/canvas, 1055 x 806
Inscribed: McCahon Jan-March '50
Auckland City Art Gallery
Presented by the Auckland Gallery Associates, 1960.

"As with the North Canterbury Landscape this painting was one of the early presentations to the Gallery by the Auckland Gallery Associates.

When I painted the picture I was living in Barbour Street, Christchurch, but the actual subject of the picture relies very much on my memory of the Otago landscape. This was a Dunedin thing I particularly liked around Wakari, especially with the trees as they are shown in the painting sitting on the skyline as they do. No doubt all this landscape profile has now vanished. The heads on the far right were derived from drawings I had made during organ recitals held in the Dunedin Town Hall on Sunday nights. The particular prominent nose on the centre figure was an attribute of a lady we knew in Mapua who had lots of children and who also features in a large number of my paintings. None of these paintings are attempts at portraiture with the exception of one called The Family owned by Pat Hayman. I forget the origin of the angel but I think it probably came indirectly from Titian.

The blue used in this painting was a colour I particularly liked and was called Frater blue after the name of an Australian painter and paint manufacturer. I brought it back from Australia when I visited there a year or so previously. The colour features in a lot of paintings I did at this time. Several versions of this particular painting exist."

(Artist 1969)

7. Six Days in Nelson and Canterbury, 1950
oil/canvas, 889 x 1168
Inscribed: title, McCahon Oct '50
Auckland City Art Gallery
Presented by the Auckland Gallery Associates, 1977
8. North Canterbury Landscape, 1951
oil/canvas, 914 x 1080
Inscribed: McCahon May '51
Auckland City Art Gallery

"This picture of the northern part of the Canterbury Plains is derived from a photograph looking north-west from Amberley that was printed in the Weekly News. It is one of a series consisting of between twenty to thirty paintings which in style naturally precedes the Bridges painting. At the time when it was first painted I was not very happy with the sky: there was a sort of disruption between the sky and the land forms. Originally the sky was much brighter. The sky was made bleaker, as it is now, and was painted this way a year later. The cloud forms fore-shadow the later cloud images that I used in the Northland paintings quite a few years later and which have irreverently been referred to as the 'bum of god'. I still feel land and sky don't quite go and there is a very badly out-of-tone paddock in the left middle distance. The two best of this lot belong, firstly to Miss Jean Horsley, a lovely yellow one, and to Professor and Mrs. Prior, a very simple green one."

(artist 1969)

"Back in Christchurch I started work on a painting initially called Paddocks for sheep. This was to be a large work based on some wonderful aerial photographs of North Canterbury where the plain is slowly devoured by the hills and where the paddocks with their safety give way to wilder hill country. I gave up, and sheep country became the North Canterbury I had known much earlier when the railway was going through and places like Parnassus, Conway and Clarence were familiar. We lost the sheep and gained a bridge. This was in 1952. This was first hung in the 1952 Group exhibition. I finished painting it there."

(Artist 1972)

9. The last Titirangi landscape, 1959
oil/canvas/hardboard, 581 x 565
Inscribed: Titirangi Sunday Oct.18 '59 McCahon

10. Here I give thanks to Mondrian, 1961
enamel/board, 1194 x 1816
Inscribed: title, Colin McCahon March '61
Auckland City Art Gallery
Presented by Auckland Gallery Associates, 1964

"Not long before this picture was painted the family left our house in Titirangi to come to live in the city; that is at our present home in Partridge Street. The painting reflects the change I felt in shifting from Titirangi with its thick native bush and the view of French Bay to that of the urban environment. This picture belongs to a whole lot of paintings that were, believe it or not, based on the landscape I saw through the bedroom window. This also applies to the Gate paintings and it shows the remarkable change that happened in my paintings from what I had been doing at Titirangi to what I did in town. The one work, or should I say series, that links these two sets of paintings is the Wake which was painted at night at the Art Gallery in what later became Les Lloyd's conservation studio.

The words 'Here I give thanks to Mondrian' reflect my admiration for the gentleman. It was only at this stage did I realise his importance as a painter. I had seen some early works in San Francisco, and also some of his later works in other parts of the States. What really impressed me was that, although they were often very small, they had an openness and scale that extended beyond the actual edges of the painting - a thing I find only happens in front of the originals and which cannot be seen in a reproduction. This effect, and also the way in which they are painted, is incredibly subtle.

Originally all the straight lines in this picture were done with masking tape but I had some trouble with this method and they later had to be done by hand."

(Artist 1969)

"Mondrian, it seemed to me, came up in this century as a great barrier - the painting to END all painting. As a painter, how do you get around either a Michelangelo or a Mondrian. It seems that the only way is not more 'masking-tape' but more involvement in the human situation.

(Artist 1972)

11. How is the hammer broken, 1961
Dulux/board, 1219 x 902
Inscribed: title, C.M. Oct Nov '61

"In the next three paintings I touched on a usable image based on the South Kaipara Head landscape. The compositions all come from a tree outside our bedroom window, and inner

city roofs. The shaped panels come from thinking how good it would be to paint the walls of the Auckland Town Hall. Gates all round."

(Artist 1972)

12. Gate, 1961
Solpah/board, 1511 x 1219
Inscribed: McCahon April '61

"By gate I mean a way through"
(Artist)

13. Gate: Waioneke, 1961
Dulux/hardboard, 1797 x 1219
Inscribed: McCahon 3-5 '61

14. Waioneke, 1961
Solpah/board, 1784 x 1219
Inscribed: Waioneke McCahon May '61

15. Numerals, 1965
PVA/board (No's 2 and 13: 1219 x 914, others 1219 x 609)
Inscribed: McCahon April May '65

"The large numerals series happened at this time. These took months to paint and developed very slowly. They work as a painting and as an environment. They are where we are in one way; and, in another way, if we could walk on from 10 where would we get to. I worked out many new formal problems here and in paintings following them. The work on this series had begun in 1964 and was finished in 1965."

(Artist 1972)

16. The fourteen Stations of the Cross, 1966
acrylic/paper, each 813 x 584
Inscriptions:
 1. ONE: CHRIST IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH
 2. TWO: THE CROSS IS LAID UPON HIM
 3. THREE: HIS FIRST FALL
 4. FOUR: HE MEETS HIS BLESSED MOTHER
 5. FIVE: SIMON IS MADE TO BEAR THE CROSS
 6. SIX: HIS FACE IS WIPED BY VERONICA
 7. SEVEN: HIS SECOND FALL
 8. EIGHT: HE MEETS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM
 9. NINE: HIS THIRD FALL
 10. TEN: HE IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS
 11. ELEVEN: HIS CRUCIFIXION

12. TWELVE: HIS DEATH ON THE CROSS

13. THIRTEEN: HIS BODY IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

14. FOURTEEN: HE IS LAID IN THE TOMB

"Each one of the series is numbered and inscribed with its traditional caption. This series is closely related in feeling to the Numerals and some of the Waterfalls as well as to many other paintings. It follows the earlier Stations made for the Upland Road Convent. They are all concerned with Man's fall and his resurrection. They also relate to the Elias subject but treat it in a different and new way. The black crows of the Van Gogh cornfield hovered over this landscape too, but have failed to destroy it - yet. I am saying what I want to say in these paintings but I am still too abstract."

(Artist 1972)

17. North Otago landscape 4, 1967
acrylic/board, 1219 x 1219
Inscribed: McCahon North Otago '67

The North Otago landscapes "are based on places I have seen and known. I once lived in North Otago and in the last eighteen months have revisited the area three times. These visits have all been made in the winter. Each time it has been windless and cold. Once a thin snowfall lay over the hills and the essential black and green quality of the landscape was emphasised. Unlike many other parts of the country the landforms of North Otago suggest both age and permanence. They have been formed, not by violence, but by the slow processes of normal erosion on more gentle landscape faulting than has happened elsewhere.

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

(Artist 1967)

18. Still life with altar I, 1967
acrylic/board, 533 x 1080
Inscribed: title, McCahon Jan. Feb. '67

- 19 . Still life with altar III, 1967
acrylic/board, 527 x 997
Inscribed: title, McCahon Jan Feb 67

"Things that happened to me in 1967 resulted in the odd series of 1968 called Visible mysteries; these in their turn came from a previous series called Still life with an altar. Both these series are covered by the following paintings. It says something about where I wanted to go and what I was painting about - but not enough. I didn't reach far enough. I feel that some of this series will eventually be seen as more successful than they might now appear."

(Artist 1972)