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The Canterbury Society of Arts 1880-1996:
Conformity and Dissension Revisited.

A Thesis submitted in
fulfilment
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TABLE OF CONTENTS
VOLUME ONE

ABSTRACT iii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS v

PREFACE 1

Chapter One. The Canterbury Society of Arts: Cultivating the Public Mind in the ‘Civilised’ Town. 3

Chapter Two. Gems of Art for Study and Enjoyment. 1881-1932. 39

Chapter Three. Housing the Pictures in a Substantial and Cosy Gallery. 80

Chapter Four. ‘We Must Progress – In These Days Nothing Can Stand Still.’ The CSA. 1932 – 1945. 118

Chapter Five. W. S. Baverstock. A One-Man Band. 137


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appendix I:</strong> CSA Councils 1880-1996</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appendix II:</strong> CSA Working Members 1881-1995</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appendix III:</strong> The Collection of the Canterbury Society of Arts 1881-1996</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract


Established in 1880 the Canterbury Society of Arts (CSA) dominated the arts in Canterbury for nearly a century and was the most significant art society in New Zealand. This thesis examines the CSA's history from 1880 to its change in trading name to the Centre of Contemporary Art (COCA) in 1996 when the Society sought to redefine its role. Chapter One considers its origins, comprising a discussion of the period from 1850 to 1880 in which it was founded as part of an educational complex that reflected Edward Gibbon Wakefield's ideal for the systematic settlement of Canterbury. A discussion of the Society's permanent collection from 1881 to 1932 in the following chapter draws attention to how the CSA was guided by its founding ambitions to promote the development of New Zealand art and accompanying responsibilities for art education. Chapter Three considers the premises and art galleries utilised by the Society from 1881 to 1932, revealing that its objectives to advance the arts remained visionary and often demanding. In Chapter Four the period between the Depression and the end of the Second World War is examined and economic and aesthetic challenges, evident in the Society's limited capacity to purchase works for its collection, alongside the emergence of new art organisations such as the Group are discussed. This is followed by a consideration of the post-war period from the perspective of the CSA's remarkable secretary from 1943 to 1959, William Sykes Baverstock. His response to an emerging modern movement provides a context to examine significant changes in the arts which initially posed a challenge to the CSA. Consideration of the 1960s to mid-1970s in Chapter Six reveals the vital role played by the CSA in supporting the development of contemporary New Zealand art and includes discussion of significant events and exhibitions such as the Hay's Art Prize and the expansion of the Society's programme to include international shows and solo exhibitions of contemporary sculpture, craft, design, and painting. It argues that these activities represented the CSA's most ambitious and successful period in its history, symbolised by its new modernist-styled gallery which opened at 66 Gloucester Street in 1968. An examination of the late 1970s to mid-1980s in Chapter Seven demonstrates that the CSA continued to maintain its influence as a centre for contemporary arts practice. However, the demands of a greater arts professionalism
championed by the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council and accompanied by a growth in dealer galleries, meant that the CSA also became subjected to criticism and this despite its continuing capacity to expose large audiences to new and challenging arts practices. The close and long-standing relationship between the CSA and the Canterbury College School of Art is considered in Chapter Eight and the way in which this contributed to the Society’s cultural supremacy is acknowledged. The de-accession of 42 important historical works from the CSA’s permanent collection in 1995 discussed in Chapter Nine reveals the extent to which its stature had substantially changed by the 1990s. Its essentially nineteenth-century infrastructure was ultimately inappropriate for addressing new levels of arts professionalism. Chapter Ten concludes that the CSA was a visionary, and sometimes radical, arts organisation that deserves to be more carefully and generously considered. Indeed, its long history reveals a vital arts and educational institution that has made an essential but hitherto hugely underrated contribution to New Zealand’s cultural development.
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Preface.

The Canterbury Society of Arts 1880-1996. Conformity and Dissension Revisited, reassesses the contribution that the Canterbury Society of Arts (CSA) made to the development of the arts in New Zealand from its establishment in the late nineteenth century to its reconstitution in the late 1990s as the Centre of Contemporary Art, or COCA. The title of the thesis is inspired by Gordon Brown’s survey exhibition catalogue, New Zealand Painting 1940-1960: Conformity and Dissension. Like Brown’s two earlier survey exhibitions, New Zealand Painting 1900-1920: Tradition and Departures (1972), and New Zealand Painting 1920-1940: Adaptation and Nationalism (1975), it addressed the development of the country’s art by detailing the accompanying social and cultural context of each period and evaluating the presence and influence of the country’s arts infrastructures. In all three publications, Brown was highly critical of art societies, consistently describing such institutions as reactionary and restricting the development of serious art, supposedly for their failure to nurture the work of younger and more ‘radical’ artists. He described the quality of painting exhibited in the art societies’ annual exhibitions as ‘dull and conservative’, and concluded that: ‘This inertia, this easy acceptance of established attitudes was indicative of a certain smugness that refused to evaluate changes in the cultural climate and so stuck steadfastly to a self-satisfied traditionalism.’¹ He also summarised the establishment of independent art groups that provided alternative exhibition opportunities for artists and maintained that, in part, such groups emerged due to the failure of the art societies to respond to their more serious needs:

In a period when the art societies were largely devoid of artistic vitality, it is to the many groups who [sic] came into existence to survive or lapse after two or three years, to which we must turn for a truer sighting of what occurred with some significance in painting during the 1940s and ‘50s. The reason is simple, for it was the serious artists who, besides dissatisfaction, felt the compulsion to form a conclave of their own.²

Brown’s description of the limited contribution that art societies made to the development of New Zealand art typifies the opinions of many of the country’s art

² Brown, p. 45.
historians and commentators of his generation and beyond. However, the history of the CSA reveals a quite different narrative in which the Society emerges as highly supportive of contemporary art and frequently at the vanguard of such practice. *The Canterbury Society of Arts 1880-1996: Conformity and Dissension Revisited,* addresses Brown’s comments and those of numerous other writers who have been critical of the perceived conservatism of art societies. It documents the history of a vital and sometimes radical arts institution that was generally highly supportive of cultural development. In addition, as a social and cultural survey of the arts in Canterbury, the thesis also adopts a similar strategy to Brown’s three survey publications by highlighting the economic and cultural environment in which the arts were fostered.

As the director since 1999 of the Centre of Contemporary Art, and the organisation that the CSA has evolved into today, I acknowledge an association with its history, but would hope that this reassessment of the Society is not perceived as unqualified praise for the institution. Rather, in view of Brown’s and other critics’ condemnation of art societies, this dissertation aims to address the absence of a more dispassionate evaluation of how these organisations nurtured cultural development in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries in New Zealand. As Canterbury’s predominant institution for all aspects of the visual arts for almost a century, it should be recognised that the CSA’s support for the arts inevitably encompassed the work of both professional and amateur. The Society was well aware of the complex and pluralistic roles that it occupied and the change in name in 1996 confirmed that it was not unresponsive to the kinds of criticisms that Brown and other arts professionals had frequently made. However, any recognition of its limitations must be placed in the wider and more significant context of the exceptional contribution that it made to the development of New Zealand art that, until now, has been largely ignored or misunderstood. Accordingly, in addition to being a history of the CSA, *The Canterbury Society of Arts 1880-1996: Conformity and Dissension Revisited,* seeks to provide a fresh perspective on the role of the art society in the development of the arts in New Zealand.
Chapter One. The Canterbury Society of Arts: Cultivating the Public Mind in the ‘Civilised’ Town.

Art... is the highest exercise of human nature.1

Although the plans of the Canterbury Association for founding the province in 1850 did not include provision for either an art society or an art gallery, the establishment of the Canterbury Society of Arts (CSA) in 1880 in St. Michael’s schoolroom, Christchurch, was entirely consistent with the Association’s intentions to make ‘adequate provision for man’s moral and religious wants.’2 The newly-formed Society represented further evidence of Edward Gibbon Wakefield’s theories of systematic colonisation, revealing the aspirations of prominent individuals who had championed education, science and the arts in the region over the previous thirty years, and allaying fears that without the civilising presence of such institutions ‘the settlers at Canterbury would soon decline... into vice and barbarism.’3 By 1880, the concentration of buildings that made up the education precinct in Worcester Street, in which the CSA was to hold its inaugural exhibition in 1881,4 ensured that Christchurch was a colonial town receptive to education and progressive thinking.5 Elected to the CSA’s first council were two figures long supportive of education and the arts in Canterbury who played an important role in the Society’s foundation, Sir Julius von Haast (1822-1887)6 and Henry John Tancred (1816-1884).7 Haast’s vision for higher learning was apparent in the institutions that he had already founded for the advancement of science and the arts, most notably, the Canterbury Museum in 1870.8 As the CSA’s first president, Tancred was a longstanding associate of Haast’s who similarly achieved prominence through his contribution to culture and learning.

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4 Press, 18 January 1881, p. 3.
8 Maling.
Tancred was an early advocate of the Canterbury Association and was well known for his pioneering role in education. This included his position as Chancellor of the University of New Zealand in 1871 and his involvement in the establishment of Canterbury College and membership on the board of governors from 1873 to 1884.\(^9\) Prior to election to the CSA council, both Tancred and Haast had assumed key roles in the administration of the Philosophical Institute in Canterbury.\(^10\) This organisation had been founded in 1862 by Haast for the development of science, literature and the arts.\(^11\) Accordingly, their presence on the CSA council in 1880 was no coincidence. Their intentions were entirely representative of those of a number of educated settlers who abhorred the potential ‘disorder and uncivilised behaviour of frontier colonies,’\(^12\) and who sought to preserve ‘the blessings of religion and civilisation.’\(^13\) The establishment of the CSA was a further milestone in the founding of important educational institutions in Christchurch. Others included the Canterbury Museum, the establishment of the Normal School in 1876, the occupation by Canterbury (university) College of its first permanent building in 1877 alongside Christchurch Boys’ High School,\(^14\) and the establishment of the Canterbury College School of Art in 1882.\(^15\) This educational precinct was accompanied by an equally significant religious and cultural milestone with the completion of the nave and tower of the Anglican Cathedral in the Square in 1881: ‘Christchurch at last had its architectural centre-piece, and was known thereafter as New Zealand’s “Cathedral City”.’\(^16\)

However, it was not only the collective will of a group of individuals, advocating the establishment of educational institutions that was responsible for the CSA’s formation. The presence of such organisations followed the foundation of vital economic infrastructures, including communication routes (port facilities, roads and rail) that contributed to Canterbury’s economic success and distinguished the region.

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\(^9\) Parton.
\(^13\) *Canterbury Papers*, p. 7.
\(^14\) Rice, p. 38.
\(^16\) Rice, pp. 38-41.
as the country's 'most progressive province in the early and mid-1870s.' The Canterbury settlement more successfully realised the social and economic plans of Wakefield and the New Zealand Company. The CSA's establishment was one further outcome of financial and cultural circumstances nurtured with intent in Canterbury since the 1850s and although Wakefield's intentions for settlement were driven by profitable speculation, in the foundation of Canterbury, his final immigration scheme, fabricated on the replication of the British class structure, most effectively achieved more dignified ambitions for systematic colonisation. Any consideration of the environment from which the CSA emerged, reveals how it perfectly embodied Wakefield's theories, and both the idealism and anxieties of nineteenth-century colonial settlement.

As the third art society established in New Zealand, what did the CSA share with its peers and how did it differ? The Auckland Society of Artists, founded in 1869, was the earliest art society in Australasia. Its ambitions, to a certain extent, initially seemed distinct from those of the later CSA, with practising artists more closely involved in its objectives and administration. Its earliest documents were drawn up by well-known watercolourist John Clark Hoyte, painter and lithographer Charles Palmer and amateur painter John Corker Vigers Symons. Its council included a number of recognised New Zealand artists including Charles Heaphy and the Reverend John Kinder. The first exhibition, held in 1871, included works by some of the country's best-known painters such as John Gully and George O'Brien. However, further activities besides the exhibition and sale of paintings were required to ensure the Society's long-term success. The resignation of Hoyte in 1875 and a downturn in the local economy meant that it faced difficulties within five years of its establishment, and in August 1880 it extended its role to encompass a broader section of the Auckland community and was renamed the Auckland Society of Arts (ASA). The change in name and the establishment of a wider base of support

18 Ibid.
21 Tizard, p. 10.
22 Tizard, p. 11.
guaranteed its growth throughout the remainder of the century and from this time the ASA shared much in common with the newly-established CSA. Both organisations held a regard for the wider public's appreciation of the arts, with education assuming a greater priority for the ASA23 as well as the development of a public art collection.24 In addition, the councils of both societies typically included prominent entrepreneurs, clergymen and educators. The first president of the ASA was well-known businessman and the provincial superintendent of Auckland in the mid-1850s, John Logan Campbell, while in Canterbury the provisional committee to establish the CSA included solicitor and local politician, William Henry Wynn Williams (1828-1913)25 and run-holder and member of the Board of Governors of Canterbury College, Henry Porcher Lance (1830-1886).26

Similarities are also evident between the CSA and the Otago Society of Artists which was founded in 1875, changing its name in the following year to the Otago Art Society (OAS).27 The discovery of gold in Otago in 1861 led to the establishment of banks and commercial infrastructures, encouraging a cultural environment to flourish. By the 1870s, Dunedin possessed a maturing arts community and significant cultural institutions, including New Zealand's first university (1869) and the country's first school of art (1870).28 Equally significant to the OAS's establishment was the commitment of lawyer and artist, William Mathew Hodgkins (1833-1898), in nurturing the fine arts in Otago, as well as the number of amateur and professional artists in the region. The corresponding growth of educational institutions and the founding of an art society is comparable with what happened in Canterbury. Recent historical comparisons between the two provinces have maintained the importance of Wakefield's vision of settlement in both Otago and Canterbury.29 However, there were differences. In spite of the establishment of educational institutions and Otago's adherence to Wakefield's designs for small-scale agriculture, the rapid financial

23 Ibid.
25 CSA Minutes, 30 June 1880, Box 1, CSA Archives, CAG1 Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu Library, and W535 MacDonald Biographies, Canterbury Museum Library.
26 L40 MacDonald Biographies.
28 Entwisle, pp. 17-18.
progress generated by the wealth of the gold field encouraged the arts in Otago. In Canterbury, economic and cultural development were fostered over an extended period of time and, by comparison, seems somewhat measured and more in accordance with the Canterbury Association’s plans. Unlike the OAS, the establishment of the CSA more directly encompassed the Association’s idealism and vision for a particular community.

The founding of art societies in Wellington and Nelson owed much to the hard work of particular artists. Charles Decimus Barraud (1822-1897) had arrived in Wellington in 1849, establishing himself as a pharmacist and subsequently becoming a professional artist. He played a significant role in the formation of the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts (NZFA) in 1882, providing the steering committee with a meeting room in the Pharmaceutical Society building on Brandon Street. Although an entrepreneurial and educated group of individuals existed in Wellington, the arts were not supported by individuals from local government, religious, educational and business organisations to the same extent as in Canterbury. Arguably the interests in an art society in Wellington rested in reconstructing the social behaviours of English society and class rather than the purposeful nurturing of religious institutions or concerns for education, which were more apparent in Canterbury.

The establishment of the Bishopdale Sketching Club in 1889 (renamed in 1901 as the Suter Art Society) was primarily due to Andrew Burns Suter (1830-1895), Bishop of Nelson, who was educated at Cambridge and was a Doctor of Divinity. His background in religion and education, and his commitment to the arts, meant that he shared much in common with the earliest CSA council members. Moreover, as a Wakefield settlement, Nelson was similar to Canterbury, being founded by ‘gentlemen, widely travelled, well-read and intellectually lively,’ who, upon arrival in the settlement, immediately sought to establish high culture, including a scientific

31 Kay and Eden, pp. 16-17.
institute, library and reading room. However, as an early Wakefield colony (1842) Nelson was initially troubled by difficulties similar to Wellington’s, Wanganui’s and New Plymouth’s, with absentee investors and a lack of agricultural development of rural holdings. Almost fifty years elapsed from the establishment of the settlement to the founding of its art society. In Canterbury, economic development guaranteed the more immediate and visible realisation of the Canterbury Association’s vision of settlement.

To what extent should the establishment of the CSA and other educational and cultural institutions in Canterbury during this period be subjected to criticisms of ‘cultural imperialism’? Australian art historian Jaqueline Strecker has maintained that it is too easy to dismiss the founding of art societies in this way. She argues that the presence of such societies and galleries also reveals the ‘first manifestations of antipodean culture combining imperial models with the unique local situation of colonial culture.’ Certainly, her claim is validated by the way in which the CSA was established alongside other institutions of higher learning. However, Strecker’s observations must be qualified by an acknowledgment that, although Canterbury was the most economically and culturally progressive province in the country in the 1870s, its development took place in a colonial settlement in which it was believed that the extinction of Maori was ‘a mere question of time.’ As arable farming intensified and educational institutions were established, Ngai Tahu’s population was crowded onto dwindling reserves and, due to measles and whooping cough epidemics, its mortality rate increased. The establishment of suitable infrastructures for settlement witnessed the temporary deprivation of the province’s indigenous culture: ‘In sheltered places where kainga noahanga might once have nestled, there now rose the mansions of the colonial gentry.’

39 Ibid.
Certainly, plans to develop land for economic gain and cultural development were paramount to the Canterbury Association’s strategies from the outset and included provision for:

a good college, good schools, churches, a bishop, clergy, all those moral necessaries, in short, which promiscuous emigration of all sects, though of one class, makes it utterly impossible to provide adequately.\(^40\)

The fine arts were included in these policies in the teaching programme for a college which would include art education and tuition in: ‘Model, Landscape, and Figure Drawing.’\(^41\) In the Canterbury settlement such ambitions were systematically put in place throughout the late nineteenth century, with educational and cultural institutions often founded or nurtured by the same individuals. In March 1852 Lyttelton resident, Charles J. Rae (1820-1904),\(^42\) wrote to the *Lyttelton Times* regretting ‘the absence of those means for social intercourse which binds man to man, and of those amusements which tend to make the individual cheerful and virtuous, and society happy.’\(^43\) Rae wished to establish ‘a Working Man’s Literacy and Scientific Institution’ and offered a selection of his own books to form a Mechanics’ Institute. His letter received the immediate support of a like-minded correspondent who advocated a meeting ‘of those interested in such a useful institution as its adoption cannot fail if conducted properly to confer a great benefit on the operative class.’\(^44\) The first Mechanic Institute was founded in Scotland in 1823 with the intention of bringing art and higher learning to working men.\(^45\) They were well-known throughout Great Britain. In 1850 there were 610 such associations with membership around 600,000.\(^46\) Their presence in Australia from the 1820s meant that the Mechanics’ Institutes were ‘by far the most significant development in the history of Australia’s cultural institutions.’\(^47\)

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40 *Canterbury Papers*, p. 8.
42 R14 MacDonald Biographies.
43 *Lyttelton Times*, 20 March 1852, p. 3.
44 *Lyttelton Times*, 3 April 1852, p. 7.
Although a Mechanics' Institute was not established in Canterbury until 1859, the spirit of Rae's request was addressed in both Lyttelton and Christchurch in May 1852. A public meeting attended by almost 150 people at the Mitre Hotel in Lyttelton saw the dissolution of the settlers' Land Purchasers' Society and a proposal to establish a Society of Canterbury Colonists with an interest in the promotion of 'intellectual amusements.' The motion was put by the soon-to-be first superintendent of Canterbury, James Edward FitzGerald, and seconded by fellow Canterbury pilgrim, Thomas Cholmondely, who noted that:

We had hitherto contented ourselves with laying out towns, erecting stores and houses, forming roads, establishing schools, and had laid the foundation of a church.... But this was not all that was required.... the proposed society would have for its objects to promote the cultivation of the mind.

This was based on a belief in the ability of education and the arts to improve society. When Rae called for the formation of a Mechanics' Institute, he also claimed that he was:

anxious to assist in producing some means of weaning my fellow men from the degrading influence of the 'grog shop,' ere the all-damning sin of drunkenness has taken too deep a root.

Such desires reflected widespread social anxieties in the mid-nineteenth century. In Britain the 'Economic, social, political and spiritual upheavals' of the industrial revolution generated in Englishmen a powerful need for guidance and support. During this period of rapid economic and social change, the threat of civil unrest never seemed far away. A faith developed in the capacity of both education and the arts to provide moral guidance. The influence of poet and critic, Matthew Arnold

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48 Lyttelton Times, 1 June 1859, p. 4.
49 Lyttelton Times, 8 May 1852, p. 5.
52 Lyttelton Times, 8 May 1852, p. 5.
53 Lyttelton Times, 20 March 1852, p. 3.
(1822-1888), played a critical role in the advancement of such values. Education and the arts ‘were parts of a discipline which aimed at moral and religious advancement.’ 56

These ideas also found expression in the writings and examples of Augustus Welby Pugin, John Ruskin and William Morris. 57 Pugin maintained that art and design were more than ‘dead decorative forms,’ and instead represented ‘underlying principles of social order.’ 58 Similarly, politician, William Gladstone asserted that ‘the highest instruments of human cultivation are also ultimate guarantees of public order.’ 59

The desire for institutions that encouraged morality and public learning in Lyttelton and Christchurch in the 1850s reflected a belief that virtue lay not in the ‘barbaric’ countryside but in the ‘civilised’ town. 60 In the 1850s in Australia and New Zealand, such ideologies were common and were informed by religious and utilitarian dimensions:

all values were, ultimately, moral values – reflections of the inscrutable way of God... a mixture of utilitarian philosophy and a belief in progress, under the watchful eye of the Deity, which was to prevail in ecclesiastical circles and polite society throughout the second half of the nineteenth century in Australia, as in most Anglo-Saxon countries. This meaty and formidable blend of the useful and good determined the taste within which art was cautiously savoured, art societies formed, and finally, art museums established. 61

The development of art societies in provincial Britain by aristocrats and gentleman scholars in the early 1800s had encompassed the good intentions of bestowing ‘an intellectual grace upon society.’ 62 These sentiments were echoed in the establishment of the Lyttleton Colonists’ Society and repeated by prominent individuals in Canterbury over the ensuring thirty years.

56 Adamson, p. 68
57 Miniham, p. 63.
58 Ibid.
59 Miniham, p. 32.
60 Burnard, Cookson and Dunstall, p. 117.
Although in 1852 the overriding interests of both the Lyttelton Colonists' Society and the Society of Canterbury Colonists were political and practical, their concern for man's moral and religious wants also meant that high culture would not be disregarded. While the Lyttelton Colonists' Society's meeting in September 1852 dealt with the need for adequate apparatus for the extinction of fire in a township constructed entirely of wooden buildings, attention was also given to a portrait of the chairman of the Society. The presentation of a painting of Dr. William Donald (1815-1884), by Mary Townsend (Mrs Donald) (1822-1886), who had painted portraits in England prior to her emigration, was greeted with tremendous excitement:

Mr. Birch called the attention of the meeting to a valuable present which had been made through the society to the public of Lyttelton... A portrait of their Chairman, Dr. Donald was the donor (hear) and he (Mr. Birch) was assured that the gift would be duly appreciated under any circumstances, and the more so when he added that the portrait was painted by Mrs. Donald (cheers). He therefore moved their secretary be instructed to write a letter to Dr. Donald, conveying to him the thanks of the Society for his valuable present and to Mrs. Donald, their gratitude for the kindness which had induced her to execute the portrait. The Rev. B. W. Dudley seconded the motion which was carried unanimously amidst lively applause.

If he was in attendance, Rae must have departed from this meeting gratified that his desire for 'amusements' to encourage a 'virtuous, and happy society,' in some degree had been met so readily.

Townsend's activities as a portrait painter were not the only evidence of the fine arts in Canterbury during this period. William Howard Holmes (1825-1885) had taken

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63 *Lyttelton Times*, 22 May 1852, pp. 5-7. Reports of the meetings in Lyttelton and Christchurch discuss the sometimes unwelcome influence of Governor George Grey on local politics.
64 *Lyttelton Times*, 11 September 1852, p. 6. The present whereabouts of this portrait is unknown.
65 D365 MacDonald Biographies.
68 Platts, p. 130.
up a teaching position at the newly established Grammar School and was advertising sketches of Canterbury for ‘Gentlemen desirous of obtaining copies either for themselves or their friends in England’ in the *Lyttelton Times* in December of 1851. Such displays of art were complemented by the work of amateur artists including FitzGerald, an avid watercolourist and observer of life in the colony. However, it is important to place the arts in the wider context of this period of settlement. Although there were several artists in Lyttelton, there were few venues where they could exhibit work, unless their paintings and prints were placed alongside other goods and items in supply stores. Moreover, the Lyttelton Colonists’ Society had been formed in a settlement less than two years old. In 1851 many of the immigrants had been living in ‘primitive shelters made from thatched raupo or toetoe, daubed with mud.’ Basic requirements of shelter and warmth were a major priority, with rodents and other pests abounding, particularly in the winter of 1851. Fundamental services of transport, bridges and roads were still largely absent and crossing the Avon River was perilous. Christchurch was a ‘howling wilderness,’ populated almost entirely by tall flax and scrub and ‘in its first twenty years or so belonged categorically to the frontier.’ However, with some level of optimism the Canterbury pilgrims could point to the establishment of a local newspaper, the *Lyttelton Times*, a footbridge across the Avon River at Worcester Street, a ferry service at Ferrymead and a hotel, the White Hart, in Lyttelton. With little more than 100 houses in the settlement, the enthusiasm for the chairman’s portrait of a newly formed society is testament to the community’s confidence in the Canterbury Association and Wakefield’s founding vision.

Equally important was art’s capacity to record for posterity the activities of this settlement. The exhibition of a view of Akaroa by surveyor Edmund Norman (1820-

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69 Roberts, p. 12.
70 *Lyttelton Times*, 27 December 1851, p. 1.
71 Roberts, p. 12.
73 *Lyttelton Times*, 2 December 1854, p. 1. In 1854 storekeeper James Swinbourne advertised a selection of British and European paintings that had arrived on the *James Scott* from London.
74 Rice, p. 18.
75 Rice, pp. 19-21.
76 Cookston, Cookson and Dunstall, p. 15.
77 Cookston, Cookson and Dunstall, p. 19.

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and architect and surveyor, Charles C. Farr (1827-1918) in Lyttelton Town Hall in 1856 met with public approval and a request that the work be purchased for the community. The *Lyttelton Times* commented:

We have been very much pleased with a sight of an oil painting, exhibited in our Town Hall within these last few days, representing a panoramic view of Akaroa Town and Harbour.... We venture to suggest to our fellow-citizens that, if this painting was purchased by subscription and displayed in the Town-Hall, it would both give great encouragement to the artist, and form a permanent ornament to the Town of Lyttelton.80

The appeal to purchase the work in 1856 is the earliest indication of intentions to establish a public art collection and this was to be an important role of the CSA in nurturing the arts in Canterbury.81

However, the most important expression of cultural development in the 1850s was the establishment of the Mechanics' Institute. At a meeting held at the Oddfellows' Hall in Lichfield Street on 26 May 1859, Rae outlined the intentions of the Institute, echoing familiar Victorian beliefs in education:

That this meeting being desirous to promote the social, moral and intellectual welfare of the community, considers it expedient that a Mechanics' Institute be at once established in Christchurch.82

Like the Australian Mechanics Institutes, the newly-formed Canterbury institution was dominated by the professional and middle classes, ‘eager for knowledge and culture as a means to further their own interests.’83 The inaugural meeting was held at the Christchurch Town Hall on 4 August and included an exhibition of art works from the collections of run-holder, H. F. Worsley84 and William Sefton Moorhouse (1825?-

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78 Platts, p. 182.
79 Platts, p. 90.
80 *Lyttelton Times*, 12 July 1856, pp. 6-7. The current whereabouts of this painting is unknown.
81 CSA Minutes, Annual Report 1880-1881.
82 *Lyttelton Times*, 1 June 1859, p. 4.
84 W758, MacDonald Biographies.
1881),85 then superintendent of the Canterbury Provincial Council. The exhibition consisted primarily of copies of the old masters and a display of ‘weapons and implements of New Zealand and South Sea island manufacture.’86 The Mechanics’ Institute was also to nurture the arts through public lectures. In 1864 this included an address by landscape artist Andrew Hamilton87 on ‘The Arts in Design’ where he examined differences between painting, sculpture and architecture.88

The establishment of the Mechanics’ Institute was followed less than three years later by the founding of the Philosophical Institute by Haast. This growth in cultural and educational institutions was symptomatic of the Canterbury settlement’s maturity. Haast was not only a geologist but also an enthusiastic singer and violinist with a passion for music89 and the Philosophical Institute emerged alongside the founding of a number of musical societies with the first annual performance of Handel’s Messiah taking place in Bonnington’s Musical Hall in 1864.90 The 1860s also witnessed the emergence of recreational and learning institutions, including the Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Association (1863), the Canterbury Yeomanry Cavalry (1864) and the Canterbury Medical Association (1865).91 The growth of such societies occurred in a period of relative optimism and prosperity. By the mid-1850s sheep runs had developed across the Canterbury plains92 and an economic boom from 1856 until 1858, due to a sudden increase in agricultural exports, encouraged the Provincial Council to resolve to build a tunnel through the Port Hills between Christchurch and Lyttelton, ensuring better transport from the plain to the port.93 The accompanying establishment of cultural institutions during this period was no accident. Historian Trevor Burnard has noted that civilising influences in Christchurch were informed by an accompanying fear that the province would

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86 Lyttelton Times, 10 August 1859, p. 5.
88 Lyttelton Times, 27 February 1864, p. 5.
89 Jonathan Mané-Wheoki, 'The High Arts in a Regional Culture,' Cookson and Dunstall [eds.], p. 302.
90 Mané-Wheoki., p. 303.
91 Cookson, Cookson and Dunstall, p. 20.
92 W. J. Gardner, Where They Lived, Christchurch: Regional Press, 1999, p. 43.
93 Rice, pp. 28-29.
otherwise descent into decadence.\textsuperscript{94} Certainly, throughout the 1850s and 1860s, many of the social problems of new settlements emerged. It was a ‘frontier town in more than just appearance… the clergy denounced drunkenness and prostitution as major social evils. Christchurch had numerous grog shops and no fewer than 28 known brothels in 1869.\textsuperscript{95}

In contrast, the Philosophical Institute represented the highest aspirations of the colony. (Plate 1) Through this organisation, Haast fostered art education and established an art gallery within the Canterbury Museum. He summarised the Institute’s objectives in an inaugural address at the Royal Hotel on 30 September 1862.

\begin{quote}
Investigations were to be undertaken in the natural history and geology of Canterbury, and in matters of economic importance, nor were literature and art to be neglected. Further a library, museum, observatory, and acclimatisation, were included in that ambitious programme.\textsuperscript{96}
\end{quote}

However, the \textit{Press} was quick to criticise Haast’s proposal to establish an institution that evidently resembled existing organisations. The newspaper maintained that the existing Mechanics’ Institute could fulfill many of the Philosophical Institute’s objectives without placing pressure on limited resources.\textsuperscript{97} The \textit{Press} editorial was probably written by the proprietor of the newspaper, FitzGerald. His belief that the time was not yet right for such institutions was further argued in his lecture, ‘On the Nature of Art,’ delivered to the Philosophical Institute in 1868.\textsuperscript{98} The address had its origins in an editorial on colonial architecture published in the \textit{Press} in April 1862.\textsuperscript{99} Reiterating Wakefield’s principles of settlement for his own means, FitzGerald emphasised the way in which art would develop in Canterbury as a civilizing influence, following its economic growth:

\begin{quote}
94 Burnard, Cookson and Dunstall, p. 118.
95 Rice, p. 32.
\end{quote}
Plate No. 1. Julius von Haast in the Canterbury Museum c. 1870.
Perhaps the point in which a colony most differs from an old country is in the almost entire absence of art. Art can only flourish in communities where great accumulated capital places a considerable number of persons in a position of ease, independence, and leisure; where the necessities of life being provided for, men turn to the cultivation of those tastes which constitute its ornament, and enhance its enjoyment.... Everyone can do without paintings and sculpture, but every one must live in a house... In our towns, buildings have been recently erected, which for the first time display some pretensions to architectural design. For example, the Government Buildings, the new Club, St. Luke's Church, and the Bell turret of St. Michael's, in Christchurch; and the Church in Lyttelton. Every man, woman, and child amongst us, as he walks abroad on his daily business, is compelled to contemplate these objects. Insensibly they operate on his mind, and help to form his taste and to mould his judgment. He may think them beautiful or ugly, but they, seen every day, cannot fail to leave an impression of some sort which becomes a part of his mind, and has its influence in forming the public taste of the community. As in morals, a sin degrades the man by habituating him to the contemplation of vice, so in matters of taste, the contemplation of what is ugly helps to degrade and pervert the judgment of the spectator.... An artist and his age mutually act and re-act on each other. The artist educates and refines the popular taste, and the popular taste so elevated becomes better able to appreciate lofty designs, and less satisfied with mean ones.100

However, FitzGerald's faith in the progressive development of the Canterbury settlement failed to convince Haast and his associates. Prominent landowner and Provincial Council member, John Bealey (1817-1867),101 replied to the Press that the Mechanics' Institute and the Philosophical Institute were distinct. His defence was timely and an important and early argument in support of academic learning in the province. He believed that the Mechanics' Institute's objectives included a broader range of subjects while the Philosophical Institute's concerns were with scientific and philosophical research.102 Haast won this debate, and the Institute became a leading voice, supporting serious culture in Canterbury.

100 Press, 19 April 1862, pp. 1-2.  
101 B152a MacDonald Biographies.  
102 Press, 9 August 1862, p. 5.
However, a group of prominent churchmen, local politicians, businessmen and lawyers seeking to establish an art society, school of design and art gallery in Canterbury in the following year were less successful. Even though the proposed organisation featured an impressive selection of local entities, they failed in their intentions. With H. F. Worsley serving as Secretary, the committee comprised some of the best-known names in Canterbury: the Reverend Charles Alabaster (1834-1865), Dr. Charles Barker (1819-1873), James Buller (1812-1884), Charles Calvert (1811-1883), Charles Clark (1824-1906), the Reverend Charles Fearon (1812-1865), the Reverend Charles Fraser (1832-1886), Alfred George Hawkes, Jacobs, Isaac Luck (d.1881), George Mallinson, the Venerable Archdeacon Mathias (1805-1864), Grosvenor Miles (1822-1865), Charles Newton (1832-1885), John Ollivier (1812-1893), William Rolleston (1831-1903), Henry Sewell (1807-1879), Francis Slater (1812-1879), Tancred and Frederick Thompson (1805-1881). These respected public figures came from well-educated backgrounds and shared associations with other cultural institutions in Canterbury, including the Lyttelton Colonists' Society, the Mechanics' Institute and the Philosophical Institute. Alabaster was a graduate of Lincoln College, Oxford who had come to Canterbury in 1859. He was a devout Anglican churchman committed to education, opening a preparatory school for boys to enter Christ's College in 1861. Frazer had trained at Marischal College in Aberdeen and was the first Presbyterian minister in Canterbury. He lectured at meetings of the Lyttelton Colonists' Society and the Mechanics' Institute and was elected to the Geological Society of London in 1867. Ollivier had been educated at Abbeville in France. He arrived in Canterbury in 1852, establishing a profile by auctioneering large runs and landholdings. He was also a member of the Provincial Council and the Philosophical Institute. Indeed, associations in class, religion, the professions, politics and participation in the local economy and the community united this group. Eight members were associated with, or elected members of, the Provincial Council. Many were owners of large Canterbury run-holdings or secured

103 Haast, pp. 273-301. Although it may seem surprising that Haast is not listed on the proposed council, his absence is explained by geological surveys he undertook in the South Island from November 1862 to May 1863.
105 A65 MacDonald Biographies.
106 F329 MacDonald Biographies.
107 O69 MacDonald Biographies.
significant revenue from the sale of the land, including Sewell, Clark, Thompson and Barker. Equally important were common religious views: Alabaster was assistant to Mathias and chaplain to Bishop Henry Harper,\textsuperscript{108} while Jacobs was Vicar of St. Michael’s and the first Headmaster of Christ’s College. Typical of many of the first immigrants in Canterbury, they were amalgamated ‘by an ethic of thrift, sobriety, hard work, deferred gratification and decidedly inconspicuous consumption.’\textsuperscript{109}

Although respected in the community, they faced public objections about the proliferation of cultural institutions with particular mention being made of the possibility of integrating an art gallery into a proposed museum. Presumably FitzGerald, once again, skeptically questioned the duplication of cultural institutions:

> By an advertisement appearing in this paper it will be seen that an attempt is about to be made to get up a Society for the promotion of the Fine Arts. It is a matter of curiosity that so many societies should be organized for kindred if not identical objects, when one would be sufficient. For example, it is proposed to make a permanent ‘gallery of works of Art.’ In our opinion that is an institution which ought to be combined with the general museum, for which a sum of money was voted last year to the Philosophical Institute. A public museum is an institution which ought to stand at the summit of the whole educational edifice of the country.\textsuperscript{110}

Following this editorial, enthusiasm for an art society and gallery seems to have quietly dissipated. Although the response to FitzGerald’s objections is not immediately evident, a news item in the \textit{Lyttelton Times} 28 October 1863, proposing the establishment of a school of art and design may provide a clue. Including Tancred and Ollivier, previously council members of the society, it reported that, ‘a School of Art and Design... will supply a desideratum long felt in our city, and it is a project well deserving of the encouragement and support of the public.’\textsuperscript{111} The intention to found an art school alone, was a more achievable ambition and suggests that FitzGerald’s advice had been heeded.

\textsuperscript{108} A65 MacDonald Biographies. \\
\textsuperscript{110} \textit{Press}, 26 March 1863, p.1. \\
\textsuperscript{111} Collins, p. 40.
Also listed on the committee to establish a school of art and design was novelist and painter Samuel Butler (1835-1902).\textsuperscript{112} Butler’s presence in Canterbury has been cited and celebrated as evidence of the presence of high art in the Province since the 1890s.\textsuperscript{113} He was resident in Canterbury from 1860 until 1864 and later established a reputation with the novel \textit{Erewhon} and, on his return to England, through the exhibition of his painting at the Royal Academy (1869-1876).\textsuperscript{114} Although no doubt intelligently articulated, his contribution to the development of the arts was less substantial than that of his peers. Organisations advancing high culture were probably encouraged by the debate that Butler added to such institutions through commentary he wrote for the \textit{Press}.\textsuperscript{115} Nonetheless, it is important to note that, although later achieving recognition as a painter and writer, the most substantial evidence of his active participation in the development of the arts in Canterbury rests in his presence on the committee to establish an art school. Unlike Tancred, Butler appears to be absent from the activities of the Mechanics’ and Philosophical Institute. Compared to that of Haast and other members of the Institute, his involvement in cultural infrastructures is limited. However, in his role as a witty observer and amateur artist he made a significant contribution.

Just as enthusiasm for the proposed art society and gallery appears to have diminished, so too, did plans for a school of art and design. In reality, FitzGerald was right. In the early 1860s Christchurch did not yet enjoy the economic infrastructure to support the fine arts with the maturity required for such institutions. The challenges faced by any group supporting the arts in the 1860s were considerable and were lampooned by \textit{Punch in Canterbury} in 1865. The article, titled ‘Art in Canterbury’, satirises contemporary art criticism and reveals the inaptness of high art in the settlement, contrasting the mundane realities of crossing a poorly constructed street in Christchurch with an appreciation of the arts:

\begin{quote}
The amount of artistic cultivation among the population of this province has been, \textit{Mr. Punch} thinks, very much underrated. It has been his fortune (good or
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[112] \textit{Ibid.}
\item[113] \textit{Lyttelton Times}, 9 April 1892, p. 5.
\item[114] Platts, p. 59.
\item[115] Mane-Wheoki, Cookson and Dunstall, p. 301.
\end{footnotes}
bad) to meet lately several eminent professors of High Art, whose talents, in their respective lines, are scarcely inferior to those which gain the attention of the authorities (chiefly police) in Great Britain. A few instances are brought forward for the satisfaction of critics. PAINTING.- A very successful picture was exhibited on Oxford Terrace early last week. The Right Reverend, the Lord Bishop of Hokitika, as he walked towards St. Michael’s, met a youth, in whose countenance it was not easy to distinguish the marks of latent genius. Nevertheless, the youth produced almost instantaneously a striking effect on his Lordship’s Gaiters, with no better material than street mud. His Lordship addressed him in appropriate language, and passed on. The young man then, with great rapidity, drew a remarkable face, and as His Lordship turned round, began colouring with marvellous intensity. The group was viewed with great admiration by several gentlemen on the other side of the street.\footnote{\textit{Punch in Canterbury,} 27 May 1855, p. 32.}

In 1863 residents of Christchurch had just begun to pay rates and civic amenities were only beginning to be created.\footnote{Rice, p. 31.} Important commercial and communication infrastructures remained to be established with the Lyttelton Rail Tunnel still four years away from opening.\footnote{Rice, p. 29.}

The fine arts did, however, receive significant acknowledgement in 1866 when the Provincial Council approved £200 for Nicholas Chevalier (1828-1902)\footnote{Neil Roberts, \textit{Nicholas Chevalier. An Artist’s Journey in Canterbury in 1866}, Christchurch: Robert McDougall Art Gallery, 1992.} to travel and record the Canterbury landscape, with the intention of developing a body of watercolours for the Paris Exhibition of 1867.\footnote{\textit{Lyttelton Times}, 24 January 1866, p. 2.} The discussion that took place at the Provincial Council in approving a grant for Chevalier’s journey reveals the quandary facing the settlement in nurturing serious culture while addressing the practical concerns of constructing necessary roads. The motion was put, ‘that a sum of money, not exceeding £200, be placed on the supplementary estimates, for the purposes of defraying the expenses of Mons. Chevalier… while taking sketches for an illustrated work on New Zealand.’\footnote{Ibid.} Objections were raised that the money could be better
spent on ‘Municipalities and Road Boards’ but the motion was carried.\textsuperscript{122}

Significantly, among those who supported Chevalier were two committee members from the proposed art society, Tancred and Hawkes. The Provincial Council’s vote of confidence in Chevalier was well placed and their decision vindicated by time.\textsuperscript{123} An exhibition of more than 200 drawings in the Christchurch Town Hall less than six months later drew favourable commentary. The \textit{Press} acknowledged the work’s historical merit and a request was made that Chevalier’s work should be purchased to form the beginnings of a permanent collection in the Christchurch museum.\textsuperscript{124}

This interest in an art collection to be held in the museum was entirely consistent with the policies of Haast and the Philosophical Institute. Although primarily known as a geologist, Haast made little distinction between the disciplines of art and science. Underlying his thinking was a German Romanticism informed by a belief in the presence of God in the natural environment. Haast shared such notions with his fellow countryman and emigrant artist, Johann Josef Eugen von Guérard (1811-1901).\textsuperscript{125} Both believed that science and art were allied, superficially because it was common practice for professional artists to accompany explorers on expeditions documenting the landscape through sketches,\textsuperscript{126} but more importantly through ideas about landscape painting that had found popular expression in Germany:

\begin{quote}
Carus a physician, philosopher and writer as well as a painter... recommended that artists study vegetation, climate, rock formation and the like in order to know Nature as a reality both concrete and spiritual and to experience it not as something inert, but as a living organism.\textsuperscript{127}
\end{quote}

This romantic sentiment is evident in a lecture by Haast from 1868 on the ‘Physical Geography and Geology of New Zealand’:

\begin{quote}
Nowhere is the wisdom and sublimity of the creative power more manifest than in the hidden recesses of alpine chains, and the philosopher who wishes to
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{122} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{123} Chevalier’s drawings are now held in the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington.
\textsuperscript{124} \textit{Press}, 5 July 1866, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{126} Bruce, p. 66.
\textsuperscript{127} Bruce, p. 11.
investigate the present state of the globe has to wander thither, where, in high
walls of snow-clad mountains, in deep precipices and wild gorges, the rocky
leaves of the earth's history are opened before him.128

If art and education provided moral guidance to a developing Wakefield settlement,
the capacity of art and science to provide religious and philosophical enlightenment
was an equally important component. Haast's commitment to both disciplines was
shared by a number of early CSA council members. Lawyer, William Richard
Fereday (1820?-1899), who was a CSA council and working member in the 1880s,
was widely recognised as an authority in entomology and the classification of species
of New Zealand moths and butterflies. He published numerous scientific papers and
was chairman and president of the Philosophical Institute from 1883 to 1884.129
However, his passion for detailing the natural environment was also apparent in a
review of his work in the CSA's annual exhibition of 1883 which noted that his
paintings were 'remarkably faithful to nature.'130

Tancred was to acknowledge the importance of the arts to the Philosophical Institute's
objectives in his inaugural address as president:

We have as yet done nothing for the advancement of literature, nothing for the
advancement of art... It would, I think, be a mistake to allow the feeling to
grow, which no doubt to some extent has taken root that all subjects not directly
connected with physical science are out of place here. It is well to remember
that this Institute embraces a much wider circle than this.131

Tancred's criticisms in 1873, however, need to be qualified. A number of members
of the Philosophical Institute had provided notable support for the arts in the 1860s.
In 1863 a proposal for a New Zealand Industrial Exhibition to be held in Dunedin
emerged following the display of the Otago Geological Department collection at a
bazaar and industrial exhibition in St. Paul's in Dunedin. Haast was included in a
committee of fifteen, alongside Tancred, to oversee the selection of work from

128 Haast, p. 232.
129 Peter M. Johns, 'Fereday, Richard William 1820?-1899,' Dictionary of New Zealand Biography;
130 Press, 26 February 1883, p. 3.
131 Press, 6 March 1873, p. 3.
Christchurch to be sent to Dunedin for exhibition in 1865. The success of the New Zealand Industrial Exhibition showed local artists and supporters that it was now possible to hold a large-scale exhibition in New Zealand. Its success, followed by the enthusiastic reception of Chevalier’s 1866 exhibition, contributed to an optimistic letter from Fereday to the *Press* in 1869, articulating his desire for an exhibition of paintings, engravings, photographs and works of art to be held in Christchurch:

> Upon inquiry I am led to believe that an extensive and very creditable collection might be obtained. I mean of such articles as really possess merit, for I would exclude any other; the objects to be arrived at being in my opinion to elevate the public taste. I have spoken to many gentlemen upon the subject, and they all approve of the idea, and are quite willing to lend their pictures, &c., for the occasion, and I have no doubt contributions from numbers of persons will be readily obtained.

The exhibition was held to coincide with the opening of the Canterbury Museum on Rolleston Avenue with the erection of a temporary building to hold art works and artifacts in front of the Museum. It was opened on 8 February 1870 by the superintendent of Canterbury, William Rolleston who was also listed as president of the exhibition in the accompanying catalogue. Significantly, the committee that selected work included future CSA council members: Fereday, Haast, Benjamin Woolfield Mountfort (1824-1898), and Tancred. The exhibition included paintings from Canterbury artists with 150 works listed as oil paintings and 215 as watercolours. In addition to submissions from working artists, including William Henry Raworth (1821-1904) and Gully, many art works were lent by individuals of standing in the community. The list of contributors included Haast, Fereday, Dr

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132 Haast, p. 356.
134 Roberts, p. 19.
135 *Press*, 1 September 1869, p. 2.
136 *Lyttelton Times*, 10 February 1870, p. 2.
138 *Catalogue Art Exhibition 1870*, Christchurch: William Reeves, 1870.
140 *Catalogue Art Exhibition 1870*. 

25
Donald (the first President of the Lyttelton Colonists’ Society) and work from the Philosophical Institute’s collection.\textsuperscript{141}

In his opening address, Rolleston took the opportunity to reflect on the progress of Canterbury, affirming the success of Wakefield’s plans for systematic colonisation and emphasising the civilising influence of the arts:

The founding of a new Colony, the overcoming of material difficulties, the opening out of the country for settlement have hitherto furnished the principal occasions for congratulations on the success of our undertaking as colonists, and it is admitted on all hands that our material progress in the nineteen years that have elapsed since the foundation of the settlement does great credit to our industry and perseverance.... The problems which are now agitating the minds of earnest men throughout the civilised world is how to better the social, moral and intellectual condition of our fellow-men.... We may well congratulate ourselves if, even in a small degree, our efforts are permitted to tend in the age in which we live, to the removal of social estrangement, to the cultivation of the intellect, to the refinement of manners, and to the elevation of character, by the study of all that is beautiful in Art and in Nature.\textsuperscript{142}

The exhibition’s success confirmed that the environment for the formation of an art society had improved since 1863. The \textit{Lyttelton Times} observed:

The Exhibition derives a great part of its value, as being an index of what is silently gaining ground among us, growing with our growth, and strengthening with our strength – the pursuit of higher knowledge, higher pleasures, and higher tastes. We trust that this Exhibition may be an incentive to the public generally to assist and sympathise with the object which many of us have long had in view in connection with a public museum, laboratory, public library, and school of art...\textsuperscript{143}

\textsuperscript{141} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{142} Innes, pp. 175-179.
\textsuperscript{143} \textit{Lyttelton Times}, 16 February 1870, Supplement.
Such a pronouncement must have given encouragement to Haast, particularly in light of Rolleston’s further comments suggesting that advancement in the arts was inevitable:

The opening of our Museum in this building marks but one stage of progress in our study of Science. We now seek to supplement this by the establishment of a School of Art with a room for the exhibition of designs and models.... If lectures and classes are to be of value, the means of study must be provided by a library and laboratory.  

Following the 1870 exhibition, Haast sought out works of ‘artistic excellence,’ establishing a permanent art collection and gallery in the Museum. He maintained that the best of Western art should be represented alongside science displays. Fundamental to these intentions was a commitment to education and this included the establishment of a school of art and design. Haast sought assistance from ‘gentlemen’ in England intending to collect work ‘of high artistic merit’ that would act as examples for teaching art. He singled out either original works or copies of the old masters and casts of European sculpture. His interest in art education and the purchase of work from Europe and England were to typify the CSA’s collection policy which shared a similar concern for education. In 1886 the Society approved £150 to be made available to the president of the Royal Academy (Sir Frederic Leighton) to purchase at least three paintings; a sea piece, a figure subject and a landscape for the Society, ‘the works to be of an educational character suitable for the study of advanced students.’

Similar intentions also lay behind patronage by prominent local businessman, George Gould (1823-1899) who, in 1873, secured casts of Greek, Roman, Renaissance and Baroque sculptures for the Museum’s art gallery, providing an overview of the history of Western sculpture. (Plate 2) The Press reported that;

Mr. George Gould entrusted a commission to Mr. Silver, of London, to

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144 Ibid.
145 Haast, p. 627.
146 Press, 3 April 1886, p. 2.
147 G306 MacDonald Biographies.
Plate No. 2. This photograph was taken in 1898 and depicts casts of Greek, Roman and Renaissance sculptures, including *The Dying Gladiator* and the *Venus de Milo*, presented to the Canterbury Museum by prominent local businessman, George Gould (1823-1899) in 1873.
purchase for him a number of casts of the most celebrated statues of ancient
and modern times, designing to present them on their arrival to the Canterbury
Museum – in trust for the public at large.\textsuperscript{148}

The collection covered western art from Antiquity to Neo-Classicism, including casts
of \textit{The Dying Gladiator}, the \textit{Venus de Milo} and Antonio Canova’s \textit{Perseus}.\textsuperscript{149} The
gallery in the Museum established a benchmark for the curation and display of high
art in colonial New Zealand:

The statuary arrived and was placed in the upper room of the new building, a
well-lit room 36 x 54 ft., the walls painted a deep chocolate colour, thereby
throwing out in excellent relief the collection of casts... This re-opening
marked the establishment of the first Museum in the Colony. Large crowds
filled the Gallery to inspect the statuary, the first many of them had ever
seen.\textsuperscript{150}

Haast complemented the Museum’s collection of casts of European sculpture with
British, European and New Zealand paintings of merit. In a letter to the \textit{Lyttelton
Times} he called for donations, seeking £700 toward the purchase of paintings for the
‘Picture Gallery,’ which was ‘so much desired by many of our prominent citizens.’\textsuperscript{151}
With some confidence Haast wrote in his 1882 -1883 report that the art gallery was
‘at last an established fact,’\textsuperscript{152} with the acquisition of art works by Thomas Cousins
(1840-1897),\textsuperscript{153} William Beetham (1809-1888)\textsuperscript{154} and a watercolour by J. C.
Richmond presented to the Museum gallery by the CSA.\textsuperscript{155}

This affiliation between art and education, evident in the development of the
Museum’s collection, was equally apparent in the opening of the Canterbury College
buildings in 1877, not only through an associated exhibition, but also in the presence
of individuals who lectured there, and who were to become CSA council members.

\textsuperscript{148} \textit{Press}, 10 March 1873, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{149} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{150} Haast, p. 679.
\textsuperscript{151} \textit{Lyttelton Times}, 25 April 1882, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{152} Haast, p. 894.
\textsuperscript{153} Platts, pp. 74-75.
\textsuperscript{154} Platts, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{155} Haast, pp. 894-895.
Hutton was appointed professor of biology in 1880 while fellow committee member, Charles Herbert Henry Cook (1843-1910), became the Chair of mathematics and natural philosophy in 1874.\textsuperscript{156} The exhibition that accompanied the opening of the College was held in the Museum. In addition to ceramics, gems and crystals, and manufactured items, the gallery included paintings by John Constable and Francis Danby, as well as works by Chevalier, Gully, Hoyte and James Peele (1846/7-1905).\textsuperscript{157} The exhibition was well received with crowds exceeding expectations and the Museum opening until 10.00pm on Saturday evenings with free admission. The \textit{Press} observed: ‘As might be expected, the crowd of visitors was very great, so much so that many of them were unable to obtain admission. This was more particularly the case on Saturday evening.’\textsuperscript{158}

The success of the 1877 exhibition appeared to further confirm the community’s enthusiasm for the arts. With a population of 27,800 residents in Christchurch in 1881,\textsuperscript{159} attendance figures for the exhibition were impressively estimated at 30,000.\textsuperscript{160}

Haast further encouraged public participation in the arts in Christchurch through lectures, such as his address on the indigenous art of rock paintings at Weka Pass,\textsuperscript{161} and a discussion of the history of Western art. This was based around a collection of quality reproductions purchased in 1878 from the Arundel Society in London of frescoes and paintings by Italian and Northern European artists with the express purpose of the encouragement ‘of Art and the spread of its knowledge amongst the people of this district.’\textsuperscript{162} They were the central focus for a lecture that Haast gave to the Philosophical Institute in 1879 on the ‘History of Pictorial Art,’\textsuperscript{163} in which he surveyed the development of Western Art from the period of Constantine to the High

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{Press}, 8 June 1877, p. 3.
\item \textit{Press}, 11 June 1877, p. 2.
\item Burnard, Cookson and Dunstall, p. 122.
\item \textit{Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute Volume X}, 1877, pp. 44-54.
\item Annual Report and Balance 1878, Philosophical Institute 1875 – 1891 Correspondence MB 157D1, MacMillan Brown Library, University of Canterbury
\item \textit{Press}, 25 April 1879, p. 3.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Renaissance. The perceived value of this collection as a tool for learning is also evident in their presentation to the Museum in 1882 and the place of honour they assumed in 1887, being exhibited in the Provincial Council Chamber for the Institute’s annual Conversazione.

Following the 1877 exhibition, Christchurch artists were provided with additional opportunities to submit work for display at the International Exhibition in Sydney in 1879, and the Melbourne Exhibition in 1880. Among those artists whose work was accepted for Melbourne were John Gibb (1831-1909), and William Montague Nevin Watkin (1835-1904), who were both to be early CSA council members, as well as the Society’s first honorary secretary-treasurer, Edwyn F. Temple (1835-1920). There was also an opportunity for artists to exhibit locally in an industrial exhibition in Akaroa in December 1879, ambitiously compared to the Great Exhibition in England of 1851. A growing confidence in the arts was equally apparent in the number of professional artists with studios in Christchurch: Thomas Cousins in Manchester Street, Allan B. Cambridge (1847-1911) in Hereford Street, Gibb in Barbadoes Street, and Gottfried Lindauer (1839-1926) in Cashel Street West. The public’s enthusiasm for the arts, the activities of the Philosophical Institute and the presence of professional artists, all contributed to a cultural environment quite distinct from that of the 1850s and 1860s, and ensured that an art society, at last, could be formed in Canterbury. At a meeting held in St. Michael’s on 30 June 1880, Wynn Williams proposed that a society be established to be called the ‘Canterbury Society of Arts.’ The motion was seconded by Haast and a sub-committee formed, made up of Wynn Williams and Louis Neville (1852-1919), while Temple was elected to draw up rules for the Society.

164 Haast, p. 836.
165 Haast, p. 235.
166 Roberts, p. 23.
167 Press, 11 May 1880, p. 3.
169 Platts, pp. 248-249.
170 Press, 1 June 1880, p. 3.
172 Platts, 17 December 1879, p. 3.
173 Platts, p. 74.
174 Platts, p. 60.
175 Roberts, Concise History, p. 23.
176 NS6. MacDonald biographies.
177 CSA Minutes, 30 June 1880.
At a further meeting at the public library on 15 July, Tancred was nominated president, Wynn Williams vice-president and Temple secretary-treasurer. The first council was elected, consisting of Cook, Corfe, Cousins, Haast, Leonard Harper, Hutton, Lance, Mountfort, Neville, James Edward Parker, the Reverend Edward Gordon Penny (d.1891) and Henry Alan Scott (d.1913). As president, Tancred was the only council member who had also been listed on the committee of the 1863 society. However, there were strong ties between the two organisations. Both assemblies shared similar ambitions in the realisation of the Canterbury Association’s vision for the province, possessing a deeply-felt commitment to the benefits of education and high art. Commonalities were evident in those council members who were prominent in local politics and community affairs. In addition to Tancred’s associations with the Provincial Council, Mountfort was the architect of the Provincial building, and Lance and Neville had been elected to the Provincial Council, while politician and solicitor Wynn Williams had a considerable reputation for his single-mindedness and authority in local politics. Both councils were made up of members of Canterbury’s most important social organisation for gentlemen, the Christchurch Club, including Corfe, Haast, Harper, Lance, Neville and Temple.

The individual most frequently singled out for his role in establishing the CSA is Temple. In an interview in the Weekly Press in 1900, Gibb observed that Temple ‘practically started the Society’ while Neil Roberts’s 1999 biography noted that ‘it is also possible that Temple was the catalyst for establishing the society.’ Certainly, as both secretary and treasurer, Temple demonstrated the necessary administrative skills and enthusiasm to cultivate the CSA in its early years. A draft letter by Temple in the CSA archives confirms that he wrote to particular individuals in Canterbury requesting that they put themselves forward for consideration as council members:

There are many amateurs and professionals in the Province [and] there is no reason to doubt that an annual exhibition of works of art in this city would not

178 CSA Minutes, 15 July 1880.
179 W535 MacDonald Biographies.
180 Weekly Press, 12 December 1900, p. 49.
181 Roberts, Edwyn Temple, p. 15.
be equally successful especially if the council be composed of the leading
gentlemen in the Province. May I request your permission to place your name
on the list of the Council. An early reply will oblige.¹⁸²

While the impetus for an art society had grown considerably prior to Temple’s arrival in Canterbury, Gibb’s praise for Temple’s hard work, his assumption of the duties of both secretary and treasurer, and his targeting of specific individuals as council members, confirm that he played no small part in ensuring the success of the CSA’s foundation. However, such observations must be qualified by the presence of the educational and cultural institutions developed prior to his arrival. We should not overlook the existence of a community which, after thirty years, possessed the necessary economic and cultural infrastructure, which contributed to something, far more than one man, however energetic and effective, could hope to provide. Sustaining the CSA were those individuals who had worked towards the formation of organisations such as the Lyttelton Colonists’ Society, the Mechanics’ Institute and the Philosophical Institute.

To Temple’s credit, however, the CSA was founded with considerable competence and promptness. Within eight days of the meeting of 30 June, a provisional committee, working from the constitution and laws of the Otago Art Society,¹⁸³ had drafted those of the CSA. The successful example of the OAS may have also provided further impetus to the CSA’s establishment at this time. Certainly, Temple seemed conscious of a need for Canterbury to equal Otago in the lead it had taken in the fine arts in the South Island. His draft letter seeking council members for the CSA encourages provincial rivalry:

The Otago Art Society has now been established about four years and met with every success the contributions to the annual exhibitions having become of greater merit year by year [and] since there are many amateurs and professionals in the Province of Canterbury, there can be no reason why an annual exhibition in Christchurch under the direction of a local Society should not meet with every success.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Draft letter by Temple, Reports 1880 – 1919, Box 2, CSA Archives, CAG1.
¹⁸³ Press, 1 July 1880, p. 2.
¹⁸⁴ Draft letter by Temple, Reports 1880 – 1919, Box 2, CSA Archives, CAG1.
Other than the obvious alterations in place names from those in the OAS's document, the CSA's constitution and rules are virtually identical. The principal objective was to promote 'study in the Fine Arts, and for the periodical exhibition in Christchurch of original Works of Art.' The laws of the CSA detailed the Society's administrative structures; two levels of membership, working members and ordinary members, evidence of artistic ability for acceptance as a working member, annual subscriptions (10s. 6d.), an annual exhibition and an outline of the composition of the Council, its powers and duties. The single difference between the two societies' laws was Otago's stipulation that 'Conversaziones will be held and lectures delivered upon subjects connected with art.' The absence of this clause from the CSA's constitution may seem curious for an institution established in a community in which education was central to the development of high culture. However, the very presence of a university, museum and the Philosophical Institute suggests that the council perceived that the Society's duties rested first in exhibitions and membership.

That the constitution and laws of the CSA were largely taken directly from the OAS was typical of the manner in which the formal documentation for such institutions was drafted. The details of the Auckland Society of Artists' objectives to promote 'the arts of design, painting and sculpture' were qualified by a request in 1870 that a Mrs Stoddart 'be written to on the subject of what rules were in operation in some English Societies.' Certainly, the objectives of the Liverpool Society of Fine Arts (1859), including the establishment of regular exhibitions, art lectures and the formation of a permanent gallery, are reflected in those of New Zealand art societies. Although the CSA's early constitution and rules were succinct in terms of the breadth and detail of their ambitions, almost from the outset these were extended. At a meeting on 9 September 1880 a subcommittee was established to administer the

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186 Ibid.
187 Constitution and Laws of the Otago Art Society: Dunedin, Otago Art Society, 1876.
188 Tizard, p. 8.
holding of Art Unions\textsuperscript{191} to secure funds for the Society’s activities. Following the first annual exhibition in 1880, it was formally decided to establish a permanent art collection for Canterbury with the purchase of Gibb’s \textit{Shades of Evening. The Estuary}.\textsuperscript{192} In addition, to encourage student participation in the arts and to raise the standard of work in the province, the CSA proposed a system of medals in 1885. Prizes were to be given for figure picture from the life, landscape from nature, design in architecture and still-life.\textsuperscript{193}

However, of greater significance as a founding document was the later publication of the CSA’s ‘Articles of Association and Memorandum of Association’ in 1889.\textsuperscript{194} The articles brought together the 1880 constitution and rules, with additional details for the establishment of a permanent art collection, art education, awards to artists, Art Unions and the founding of an art gallery. In comparison to the 1880 constitution, the ‘Articles of Association and Memorandum of Association’ are more practical and specific in their intentions. For example, the holding of Art Unions to purchase work for the collection, the purchase of land for building a gallery, and the financing of such an undertaking, are outlined with a concluding statement that the CSA foster the arts with whoever and whenever the appropriate opportunity may take place.\textsuperscript{195}

Even today this comprehensive vision of the Society looks entirely admirable. There were, however, very practical reasons for its expression. At a special meeting held at the Christchurch Public Library on 10 of July 1889, the CSA’s president, Richmond Beetham (1836-1912)\textsuperscript{196} outlined the dilemma the Society faced as it sought to establish an art gallery in the city. To be able to legally obtain a Government grant of land, the Society needed to register under the Companies’ Act of 1882.\textsuperscript{197} It was agreed by the CSA council to comply with this requirement and Wynn Williams and secretary, Captain Christopher Garsia (1837-1917)\textsuperscript{198} agreed to examine the Society’s

\textsuperscript{191} CSA Minutes, 9 September 1880.
\textsuperscript{192} CSA Minutes, 25 January 1881. This painting is now in the Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu.
\textsuperscript{193} CSA Minutes, 16 November 1885.
\textsuperscript{194} \textit{Articles of Association and Memorandum of Association of the Canterbury Society of Arts}, Christchurch: Canterbury Society of Arts, 1889.
\textsuperscript{195} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{196} Platts, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{197} CSA Minutes, 10 July 1889, Reports 1880-1919, CSA Box 2, CSA Archives, CAG1.
\textsuperscript{198} C64 MacDonald Biographies.
current rules and draft appropriate articles of association to be submitted to the committee. Wynn Williams was already aware of the inevitability of the need to incorporate the Society. Prior to the meeting he wrote of his concerns about the CSA's wish to purchase land to Barraud in Wellington, then President of the NZFA. Barraud replied that the NZFA had faced identical problems in its intentions to secure land for a gallery:

We were endeavouring to obtain a section of land from the Government on the reclaimed land here and found that the great difficulty in our way was that the Govt would not convey to trustees, but that we could by becoming incorporated get over this obstacle and this course Sir Robert Stout strongly advised us to take. – It has been allowed to hang over a long time, but has now been accomplished.

Barraud also mailed Wynn Williams a copy of the recently published 'Articles of Association and Memorandum of Association' of the NZFA and this formed the model for the CSA's document. Apart from name changes to the institutions and places, the only alterations made to the NZFA's document by the CSA were the removal of minor details concerning the election of working members and dispensation to hold an annual working members' exhibition.

Pragmatic as this document may seem, its realisation and the accompanying decision to build an art gallery were milestones in the CSA's history. This was acknowledged in the annual general meeting of 1890:

The Council in presenting its annual report has to congratulate the Society on two very important changes which have been effected during the past year, namely the registration of the Society under the companies act, 1882, and the acquisition of a site for an Art Gallery. By a special act of the Legislature last session, the good work done by the Society was substantially recognised by the

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199 CSA Minutes, 10 July 1889, Reports 1880-1919.
200 Barraud, letter to Wynn Williams, 22 May 1889, Reports 1880-1919, CSA Box 2, CSA Archives, CAG1.
201 Articles of Association and Memorandum of the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts. Copy held in Reports 1880-1919, CSA Box 2, CSA Archives with handwritten notes by CSA council members.
grant of a valuable site for a gallery in Christchurch at the corner of Armagh and Durham Streets.  

The shared ambitions of art societies to nurture the arts through exhibitions, Art Unions, education, an art collection and the establishment of an art gallery, meant that commonalities between such institutions were inevitable. More importantly however, the pragmatism revealed by the CSA in seeking to secure land for an art gallery is consistent with the attitude of the Canterbury pilgrims from their arrival in 1850. While the Canterbury Association’s founding vision was informed by a belief that economic development would occur under the ‘superior social usefulness of agriculture,’ such theories were quickly modified in the earlier years of settlement by the successful model of large-scale sheep farming provided by Australian squatters working in Canterbury. Settlers immediately realised that sheep farming ‘released economic forces which, in the space of little more than a year, transformed the Canterbury Settlement’ and allowed many colonists to take up other professional activities. Similarly, Wynn Williams’s decision to act promptly and resolve the Society’s legal status recognises that the CSA was not only informed by a vision that embraced the arts as fundamental to higher learning, but that the Society encompassed an entrepreneurial attitude that responded to the demands of establishing the structures and systems of a significant cultural institution by the most practical means achievable.

The CSA was founded at the end of a period of significant economic growth that was followed by depression. A dramatic fall in land values in 1879 led to a decade of recession throughout New Zealand. However, through sound financial management, by 1890 the Society had met the challenges of the ‘Long Depression,’ and amassed almost £1,100 in the bank in long-term investments, developed a collection of 52 art works ‘costing nearly £1,000,’ and secured a grant of land to build an art gallery. This combination of principles and common sense was important to

202 CSA Minutes, Annual General Meeting 1888 - 1889, 1 February 1890, Reports 1880-1919, CSA Box 2, CSA Archives, CAG1.
204 Webb, pp. 195, 198.
205 Rice, p. 46.
206 Lyttelton Times, 19 February 1890, p. 6.
the CSA, not just in 1890, but well into the twentieth century. From its establishment in 1880, through the holding of annual exhibitions and the development of a public art collection, it assumed a dominant authority in the arts in Canterbury for almost 100 years. It is also important to remember that in the early nineteenth century in Great Britain the formation of art societies by gentlemen and scholars filled a gap that the British government or local authorities had then yet to address:

Numerous private associations of artists of the societies for cultural purposes, formed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, attest to the considerable interest which aristocrats, connoisseurs, gentlemen-scholars, and dilettanti took in the welfare of the arts. In the absence of cultural enterprises sponsored by the state, these societies served as the major sources of artistic activity in the life of the country.²⁰⁷

Without a significant commitment to the fine arts from local or central authorities in 1880, the CSA was to occupy a similar role in the cultural development of Canterbury. Although the first public art gallery in Christchurch was still more than half a century away, the CSA was already beginning to work towards the resources for such an institution, not only through the acquisition of art works for a public collection but also through securing land for the Society’s gallery in 1889. Its council was well-aware of the responsibilities that accompanied the comprehensive strategy of the Canterbury Association to ‘make adequate provision for man’s moral and religious wants.’

²⁰⁷ Miniham, pp. 4-5.
Chapter Two. Gems of Art for Study and Enjoyment. 1881-1932.

The opening of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery on 16 June 1932 was accompanied by the presentation to the Christchurch City Council of 125 art works from the CSA’s permanent collection. The president, Dr G. M. L. Lester (1861-1944), emphasised that this gesture was not simply a loan of the Society’s art works: ‘We are giving up our position as custodians of the permanent collection and handing it over to the new gallery.’\(^1\) The Society’s gift consisted of more than half the works acquired by the institution since 1881,\(^2\) accounting for 75% of the McDougall Gallery’s foundation collection.\(^3\) The selected works presented to the City Council were considered to be the best pictures in the CSA’s possession and their donation to the city was a milestone in its history.

The establishment of a public art collection of works of the highest aesthetic quality and their placement in a purpose-built public gallery was integral to the CSA’s vision for the arts from its foundation in 1880. When it purchased John Gibb’s *Shades of Evening – The Estuary* in 1881, (Plate 3), the Society declared that it was forming ‘the nucleus of a gallery of art belonging to the society which may hereafter develop into one of some importance.’\(^4\) Such aspirations were repeated on numerous public occasions. In 1901 for instance, lawyer, politician and CSA president, E. C. J. Stevens (1837-1915), congratulated the Society on the state of its finances following the building of the Armagh and Durham Street gallery and noted that it was now very well placed to focus upon its key objective, the development of a public art collection:

> In a very short time the Society would be altogether out of debt, and the building and collection of pictures would belong to the Society without any responsibility whatever attaching thereto.... In a very few months the Council of the Society

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\(^1\) *Press*, 16 December 1931, p. 10.
\(^3\) *Illustrated Catalogue of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand*, Auckland: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1933. This catalogue documents 160 art works, but groups two collections of miniatures (99 and 106) as one item, making a total of 169 works. In addition, M. E. R. Tripe’s *Peacocks* is listed in the catalogue as being presented by J. J. Thomson. However, this work is documented as being previously in the CSA’s collection. See CSA minutes, 12 March 1929.
\(^4\) CSA minutes. Annual General Meeting 1880-1881.
Plate No. 3. John Gibb, Shades of Evening – The Estuary, 1880, Oil on Canvas, 543mm x 1001mm. This painting was the first work acquired by the CSA for its collection.
would be in a position to devote itself to the real work for which the Society was formed, viz, the purchase of works of value.  

As the collection grew, the Armagh and Durham Street building proved to be less than adequate and the CSA placed increasing demands upon the City Council to build a public gallery. In 1925 the correlation between the permanent collection and the construction of a suitable gallery was clearly expressed through a motion put forward by the Society to the City Council. It was resolved:

> to hand over and dispose of the works of art now belonging to the society, and known as the permanent collection, to the Mayor, councillors and citizens of Christchurch, when the said Mayor, councillors and citizens shall have provided a suitable Art Gallery or building for housing, collecting, and exhibiting the said works of art.  

The establishment of a permanent collection and the accompanying building of a public gallery were ambitions shared by art societies throughout New Zealand, informed by a responsibility of enlightening and educating the public in the fine arts. In 1972, art critic and commentator Gordon H. Brown maintained that art societies vindicated their contribution to the arts through such an ideology:

> the usual justification for their existence enlisted the vague idea that their place in the community was essentially one of educating the public. This assumption was never clearly defined, but gave force to their role of providing some form of service similar to that of a public art gallery, as well as adding fire-power to their arguments for acquiring permanent collections for display in these galleries.  

Consequently, the art works gifted to the McDougall Gallery could be considered a concise and coherent expression of such values. However, criticism of the CSA’s permanent collection has tended to ignore the wider context of its acquisitions and has drawn attention to perceived inconsistencies and omissions. Brown argued that, although making a positive start with the purchase of work by New Zealand artists, the CSA mistakenly focused on acquiring art works by academic English painters:

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5 *Press*, 19 April 1901, p. 3.
Initially the collection was devoted primarily to New Zealand works, but with the 'New Zealand International Exhibition' of 1906-07, this situation changed, especially in view of the British Art Section of the Exhibition, and the enthusiasm with which it was greeted. [and] the Canterbury Society of Arts expended £2,442 on... nineteen paintings and miniatures and two bronze sculptures.\(^8\)

Brown criticised the CSA's enthusiasm for academic art, describing the Society's purchases as reflecting 'many of the qualities against which the more aware British artists were struggling.'\(^9\)

A more recent evaluation of the CSA's collection by Julie King has recognised the educative role that the Society pursued in its purchase of both New Zealand and British art. She described it as a body of work that reflected popular taste, consisting primarily of paintings purchased from the Society's annual exhibitions, accompanied by additional acquisitions of selected British art works.\(^10\) King also noted omissions, such as later works by the Canterbury artist, A. W. Walsh, the over-representation of popular painters, and the lack of work by women artists who made up half of the working membership in the Society's first twenty years.

How valid are such criticisms of the merits of the permanent collection? Art works were acquired by the Society through various means. They were purchased from the CSA's annual exhibitions, offered to the Society by well-meaning or entrepreneurial citizens and supporters of the arts, donated by CSA council members, artists and patrons, and offered for sale by art dealers in New Zealand and Great Britain. Through a combination of such means, by 1932 the CSA had acquired 242 art works,\(^11\) primarily paintings in oil and watercolour, alongside a small selection of sculptures, miniatures, works on paper, and

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\(^8\) Gordon H. Brown, 'Contemporary Painting and Public Collections in New Zealand,' *Survey*, No. 6, December 1972, unpaginated.

\(^9\) Ibid. Brown did, however, qualify his criticisms when comparing Christchurch's collection with art works gifted to the art galleries opened in Dunedin and Wellington in 1927 and 1936 respectively, observing that Canterbury was more fortunate in the number of contemporary New Zealand art works that it received between 1920 and 1931.


\(^11\) Appendix 3. Several purchases were subsequently de-accessioned or lost.
decorative arts. This collection, consisting of historical and contemporary New Zealand art works, paintings by Victorian and Edwardian British painters, and a few minor paintings by Dutch and Italian artists, represented aesthetic tastes and values common to art societies throughout New Zealand. However, a closer consideration of the CSA’s educative role reveals a vision that is informed by a more consistent and measured policy than has previously been recognised. The Society’s commitment to higher learning, as well as to the development of the arts in Canterbury, ensured that acquisitions encompassed the purchase of British art works as models for learning, alongside paintings by local artists. This suggests that the collection policy was considered and coherent, shaped by principles consistent with those that underpinned the Society’s establishment in 1880.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, public art collections were generally perceived as serving the educative and moral good of a community, reflecting the founding principles of art societies in general. An editorial in the *Otago Daily Times* in 1906 noted that:

> the educative value of a public collection of paintings, by artists of renown is incontestable and great and… no modern city can justly claim to have provided adequately for the instruction and elevation of its inhabitants which does not make the sight of good pictures… accessible to them.\(^{12}\)

Established as part of an educational precinct that included the Canterbury Museum, the Normal School, and Canterbury College, the CSA took its educative role seriously. Not surprisingly, when the purchase of Gibb’s painting raised the question of where it should be displayed, Haast suggested the Canterbury Museum.\(^ {13}\) Fundamental to the collection’s role was its capacity to provide models of excellence for aspiring artists. In 1885 Mountfort proposed that art works purchased or gifted should be held in the Canterbury College School of Art.\(^ {14}\) This was not merely for the care of the work in the absence of a permanent gallery. There was an expectation that students would copy the paintings, sculptures and casts as part of their studies. This was also evident in a motion put forward in 1887 at a meeting of the CSA council, instructing the secretary to write to

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13 CSA minutes, Annual General Meeting 1880-81 (held 22 August 1881.)
14 CSA minutes, 10 March 1885.
the Board of Governors of Canterbury College requesting a half-day be set aside every week in the Museum room in which the 'pictures and statuary are located for the exclusive use of students, seeing that the works belonging to the Society are deposited therein.' Like other educational institutions in Canterbury, the CSA believed in setting a good example. A comment in the 1886 minute book noted that:

the educational influences which lie within the reach of the Society are very considerable.... The advance made in the other Provinces in the direction of Art is very considerable, and Canterbury, which has always taken the lead in educational matters, should undoubtedly take care not to be left behind.

The authority of founding Society councillors such as Haast and Tancred, and their dedication to nurturing education, remained vital to the Society. As a council member in 1900, Canterbury architect Samuel Hurst Seager (1855-1935) was dedicated to the institution’s responsibilities for instruction in the fine arts. At the opening of the 20th annual exhibition, he curated an accompanying show of reproductions of western art arranged in chronological order. The exhibition was described as 'an extremely valuable one from an educational point of view.' Seager’s intentions were to bridge the cultural and geographical gap between Canterbury and Europe, educating the general public in the history of western art in the process. The Lyttelton Times enthused that a child could understand and appreciate the exhibits, which includes specimens (engravings) of the paintings of Cimabue... Raphael, Michael Angelo, Salvator Rosa, Holbein, Albrecht Durer... and Gainsborough. The sculpture illustrates the different schools - Egyptian, Greek, Roman, French, German, Tuscan, Florentine and Spanish. The architecture illustrates many of the architectural wonders from early Egyptian down to modern times.

The CSA’s responsibilities in the arts encompassed all age groups. In 1913 local primary schools were provided with free admission to persuade the students to visit the annual exhibition. The Society pursued a long-term goal of encouraging Christchurch residents’

15 14 September 1887, CSA minutes.
16 CSA minutes, undated note prior to meeting, 9 September 1886.
17 Lyttelton Times, 28 March 1900, p. 3.
18 Lyttelton Times, 9 April 1900, p. 3.
participation in the arts: ‘As the Society is doing its best to cultivate a taste for Art in the rising generation, it is to be hoped that the schools will freely avail themselves of this invitation.’\textsuperscript{19} The \textit{Press} noted that students were requested to respond to the art works by writing an essay ‘on any particular picture which takes their fancy, and there is no doubt that these visits, if arranged annually, must have a beneficial effect upon the children.’\textsuperscript{20} Under this scheme between 3,000 and 4,000 schoolchildren visited the annual exhibition in 1913.\textsuperscript{21}

However, of most importance was the CSA’s obligation to the advancement of the country’s art. Echoing Mountfort, the Society placed emphasis on the permanent collection’s provision of models of learning for students at Canterbury College and, in the process, for the development of New Zealand art. As president in 1900, Stevens stressed the significance of the Society’s paintings in providing guidance in nurturing the art: ‘From an educational point of view, putting before art students models of real merit, must have a very important effect upon the rising art of the colony.’\textsuperscript{22} At the opening of the annual exhibition in 1905, the president, Dr. Edward Jennings (1853-1929), commented on art students’ neglect in copying work at the Armagh and Durham Street gallery. Opinions were divided between those who valued the example of original art works and those students and artists who were keen to draw directly from nature. Recently returned from Europe, Sydney Thompson stated that the CSA’s collection was poor and that ‘we have no pictures in our gallery worth copying.’\textsuperscript{23} Seager came to the gallery’s defence, citing examples in the collection and pointing out that while Thompson may have recently experienced first-hand knowledge of European art, in Canterbury the CSA fulfilled this educative role as best it could:

\begin{quote}
Mr. Sydney Thompson would, I am sure, wish to modify his statement that ‘we have no pictures in our gallery worth copying’… Not perhaps by a student fresh from the finest European galleries, who has learnt the lessons our pictures are capable of teaching; but there are many students to whom such privilege is denied - many not yet sufficiently advanced to profit by the study of the great masters in Europe, yet these could derive very considerable benefit from the
\end{quote}

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\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Press}, 28 March 1913, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Press}, 5 April 1913, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Press}, 12 April 1913, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Press}, 19 April 1900, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Press}, 18 March 1905, p. 3.
\end{flushleft}

Jennings reinforced such comments, adding that the collection should be used by staff and students at Canterbury College:

We have no great masters here, with well equipped studios, frequented by numbers of eager students, most of whom are already beyond the embryo stage, and would elsewhere call themselves artists. We have, however, in Christchurch, a number of sound art teachers, doing excellent work under great disadvantages, and with necessarily limited opportunities. It is to these teachers that I have suggested the use of the Canterbury Society of Arts’ gallery, and if before turning the students loose on nature they would explain to them the methods by which those painters, whose pictures hang on our walls, achieve their ends.

Similarly, Stevens later expressed his regret that students and the general public interested in art did not make greater use of the collection:

In the galleries at Sydney and Melbourne, there were to be found constantly large numbers of students…. That was one of the great objects for which the Art Gallery was founded to popularise art and to bring it closer to the general public and to provide them with a gallery in which the best works could be studied. The council hoped that art lovers and students would make use of the Gallery habitually.

The Society’s obligation to education remained just as steadfast, following the presentation of works to the City Council in 1932. The donation meant that the Armagh and Durham Street gallery was now vacant. The CSA decided to display a collection of about 60 Medici Society reproductions of work by the ‘Old Masters’ in its place. Purchased in 1914 through public subscription for £150, they were intended:

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26 *Press*, 20 March 1914, p. 8
for the inspiration of artists and an encouragement to them to aspire to higher and better things; as an education to art students to show them how the masters of by-gone days performed their mission, and as an encouragement to the general public, to interest themselves in art in its higher forms.27

Their value as an education tool for New Zealanders remote from the art and culture of Europe was stressed:

Christchurch… was situated so far from the art centres that it was absolutely necessary that reproductions of famous paintings of the best quality obtainable should be procured for purposes of study and enjoyment.28

The Medici reproductions were lent to the ‘Technical College, the Training School and Art School, where they [had] been used for educative purposes.’29 Their exhibition in 1932 provided substantial evidence of the importance that the CSA continued to assign to their educative role. This commitment to higher learning was entirely consistent with the enthusiasm with which Royal Academy paintings had earlier been acquired.

Yet British art works in New Zealand’s public collections have been largely considered as evidence of the supposedly conservative policies of art societies, restricting the development of a unique local art. In An Introduction to New Zealand Painting, Gordon Brown’s and Hamish Keith’s discussion of the Empire Art Loan Collection Society’s inventory of works sent to New Zealand from 1932 notes that these exhibitions ‘had little positive effect on local painters.’ In contrast, a touring show of contemporary Canadian painting in 1938 was perceived to be more beneficial, and was described as impressing and influencing New Zealand painters in their signature ‘broad, crisp manner’.30

Brown’s and other art critics’ and historians’ consideration of the public collections in the main centres, has concluded that for too long the art societies sacrificed support for local artists’ work in favour of acquiring paintings by second-rate Royal Academy painters:

28 Ibid.
29 ‘Art Notes-From our own correspondent,’ Art in New Zealand, Volume 5, No. 19, March 1933, p. 191.
When considering the quality collected at the time, even the better works are meagre in number, and, with a few exceptions, the artists are of minor importance. Included amongst them are such names as Arnesby Brown, Frank Bramley, George Clausen, Mark Fisher, Stanhope Forbes, William Lee Hankey, Henry Le Thangue, Robert Macgregor, Henry Moore (who bears no relation to the modern sculptor of that name), Alexander Roche and best known of them all, Frank Brangwyn. Although their paintings can still hold some genuine interest for some of us, it is hardly an impressive list. What remain become a telling lesson in the failure of artistic insight and taste. It was a period when the dictates of the Royal Academy were paramount.31

In 1984, Anthony Mackle noted the strong presence of British art in the collection of the National Gallery in Wellington:

After 1906-07, fewer works by New Zealand artists were acquired although there were exceptions.... The War, the depression of the post-war years and reliance on British markets left New Zealand dependent on ‘Home’ in the 1920s.32

Peter Entwistle’s 1990 history of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery’s collection still laments the high prices often paid for works of ‘dubious’ quality from Britain and Europe. He singles out one work for particular derision:

Three hundred pounds were paid for E.A. Waterlow’s Sunny Hours, a work of enduring banality by an artist whose reputation has defied restoration even in the great post-war revival of Victorian painting.33

Like all other art societies in the main centres, the CSA had an enthusiasm for British art. Although the Society’s first acquisition was Gibb’s Shades of Evening – The Estuary, its commitment to education meant that a keen interest in the Royal Academy was equally evident from the outset. While Brown commented that the CSA’s permanent collection made a good beginning with the purchase of New Zealand work, the Society’s intentions

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31 Brown, ‘Contemporary Painting and Public Collections in New Zealand,’ unpaginated.
had always been to acquire the best art it could afford, and inevitably this was perceived to be art from Great Britain. Relatively modest purchases of £3 to £25 in the early years between 1881 and 1886 for individual works by New Zealand artists, stand in marked contrast to the £100 paid for A. T. Nowell’s *A Harbour at Low Tide* in 1886. This commitment to British art was fundamental to the CSA’s values and its intentions to nurture the arts in Canterbury, and had been anticipated prior to the Society’s establishment. Haast had provided the appropriate educational exemplar through the purchase of reproductions of European paintings from the Arundel Society in London in 1878 and in exhibitions of casts of western sculpture in the Canterbury Museum.

Although the CSA acquired quantitatively more art works by local artists between 1881 and 1932, the total sum spent on British art in this period far exceeded purchases of New Zealand art. When the McDougall Gallery opened in 1932, the Society had acquired over £6,000 worth of British or European art works, against approximately £2,300 spent on New Zealand works.

The majority of British paintings in the CSA’s collection were secured through four key purchases in 1886, 1903, 1906 and 1912. The CSA had written to Frederic Leighton in 1886 initially intending to spend £150 on three or more art works comprising ‘a sea piece, a figure subject and a landscape…. The works to be of an educational character suitable for the study of advanced students.’ However, this was increased to £250, following additional donations from CSA council members. Leighton selected five works; A. T. Nowell, *A Harbour at Low Tide*, George W. Joy *Reverie*, (Plate 4), L. C. Nightingale, *The Welcome Morsels*, Seymour Lucas, *The Tyrant*, and D. Rickatson, *Near Burnham Beeches*. The Society was duly grateful and reminded the public of the educative value of the purchases at its 7th annual general meeting in 1887:

> The Council recorded its infinite indebtedness and gratitude to Sir Frederic Leighton, P.R.A, for his great consideration and kindness in affording the

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34 CSA minutes, Annual report 1885-86, 31 August 1886. This painting was selected for the Society by Sir Frederic Leighton from the Royal Academy exhibition.

35 CSA minutes, 1 April 1886.

36 CSA minutes, Annual report 1885-86, 31 August 1886.

37 W. S. Baverstock, ‘Works of Art in the Possession of the Canterbury Society of Arts 31 January 1960,’ CSA Archives, Box II. This work was ‘damaged beyond repair,’ and later removed from the collection.

38 All four remaining works are in the collection of the Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu.
Plate No. 4. G.W. Reverie, c. 1887, Oil on Canvas, 920mm x 615mm. One of four works selected for purchase from the 1887 Royal Academy Exhibition by Sir Frederic Leighton, PRA.
Society the benefit of his unrivalled taste in the choice of these works; and to the members of the Society it offered its sincere congratulations on the very excellent and valuable addition their gallery will thus receive; and which could not fail to prove of immense advantage to all art students in this neighbourhood.39

The purchase of these works was followed by a further request for British art in 1903 with the selection and acquisition of four paintings for £300 from London on consignment to the Society.40 However, the most significant and valuable purchase was made at the New Zealand International Exhibition, Christchurch, in 1906-07. Originally the idea of Prime Minister Richard John Seddon, the exhibition covered 8 hectares in Hagley Park and encompassed displays of art and industry from Great Britain and its Empire, including New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, Canada and Fiji.41 It was open to the public for 125 days and was attended by 1,970,000 people.42 The International Exhibition celebrated Great Britain’s culture and industry, encompassing displays of its trade, art, science, army and navy, and the progress of its colonies. This included an extensive display of British painting, sculpture, architecture and arts and crafts.43 Alfred A. Longden, the representative of Fine Art for Great Britain, accompanied the work to Christchurch and supervised the exhibition. He emphasised the quality, value and range of fine art displayed:

The exceedingly representative collection of pictures... which will be seen at your Exhibition has been made entirely by Sir Isador Spielman, Director of Art for Great Britain assisted in the choice of non-invited work by Sir Edward Poynter and Mr E. J. Gregory, A.R.A. Sir Isador Spielman made it a stringent condition that he did not want them to send anything old which would not sell in England. What was wanted, he impressed upon them, was the very best representative modern work, and the prices of pictures to be sold were to be at the most modest figure.44

39 Press, 3 August 1887, p. 2.
40 CSA minutes, 8 June 1903 and 29 June 1903.
43 Cowan, pp. 271-278.
44 Press, 22 September 1906, p. 3.
When the International Exhibition opened, the *Press* editorial encouraged the public and the Society to purchase the work displayed:

> Here we have brought to our doors a collection that is in all respects far superior to anything that has ever before been seen in New Zealand... Here, then, is an opportunity which we trust local picture lovers and the managers of our Art Gallery will not let slip.... We therefore hope that the wealthy men of Canterbury will come forward with generous offers of help, or will themselves buy some pictures for presentation to the gallery, so that when the Exhibition is over and the art collection has become but a pleasant memory, our local art gallery will be enriched by some of its treasures.45

It remains the most extensive exhibition of British fine art ever exhibited in New Zealand.46 Of the 2,200 art works on display, 1,826 were from Great Britain,47 and they represented such prestigious institutions as

the Royal Academy, the Royal Scottish Academy, Royal Hibernian Academy, Royal Water-colour Society... Royal Society of British Artists... New English Art Club, Royal Scottish Water-colour Society, Royal Institute of British Artists, Society of British Sculptors, Royal Society of Miniature Painters, and the Society of Miniaturists.48

Canterbury responded enthusiastically, as did provinces and cities throughout Australia and New Zealand. While the Society spent £2,442, representatives from Sydney purchased £3,339 of art work from the exhibition.49 The CSA was undaunted in its fervour to secure British works. At its meeting on 24 September 1906, it was noted that £2,000 was required for the purchasing of pictures from the British Art Section of the International Exhibition. Following extensive discussion the council issued 40 debentures of £50 each bearing 4 ½ % interest per annum.50 The debentures were quickly filled by a number of the CSA council members and local businessmen, including Jennings, Stevens, Sir George Clifford (1847-1930), James Jamieson (1851-1927) and

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46 Roberts, p. 42.
47 Cowan, p. 267.
48 Cowan, p. 271.
49 Cowan, p. 285.
50 CSA minutes, 24 September 1906.
Heaton Rhodes (1861-1956). The CSA was assisted by its strong financial position with the debt incurred from the building of its gallery having been cleared in 1902. In addition, it was also to be assisted by a grant of £500 from the government in 1908 which allowed a number of the debentures to be paid off more quickly that anticipated.

The Society was also fortunate in the donation of art works from run-holder and politician, Sir John Hall, who purchased W. Matthew Hales *The Houses of Parliament* and Sir E. A. Waterlow's *A Pool among the Hills* for the collection. An additional donation of £200 from Leslie Harris, of Bing Harris and Co, was allocated for the acquisition of *The Wizard's Garden* by George Dunlop Leslie, (Plate 5) and two miniatures by Gwen Hughes were purchased and donated by CSA council member, William Reece.

The acquisition of works by admired Royal Academy painters, not to mention the success of the International Exhibition itself, contributed to a growing confidence within the Society. Following the closure of the Exhibition in April 1907, the CSA’s 27th annual exhibition opened on 30 May. In his address, Jennings celebrated the progress of the Society, pointing out that within five years the membership had trebled, the number of pictures submitted for exhibition had increased by 50%, and the quality of art works in the collection had improved. This sentiment was further endorsed by a *Press* editorial which praised the CSA’s accomplishments, including the quality of its permanent collection. It maintained that this success would be furthered by the recently aroused public interest in the arts, evident in the International Exhibition:

The Society has spent a good deal of money in adding to its permanent collection and improving its premises, and it has attracted to itself a great many artists of no mean merit.... Probably few people stop to consider how much we owe to the Canterbury Society of Arts. Yet it is tolerably evident that it is the Society which has kept alive the love of art here for a great many years past.... Now that the

51 *Press*, 8 April 1902, p. 2.
52 CSA minutes, 18 December 1908.
53 CSA minutes, 1 November 1906.
54 *Press*, 4 April 1907, p. 6.
55 CSA minutes, 3 April 1907.
56 *Press*, 18 March 1907, p. 10.
57 *Press*, 31 May 1907, p. 6.
Plate No. 5. George Leslie, *The Wizard's Garden*, c. 1904, Oil on Canvas, 1105mm x 807mm. *The Wizard's Garden* was acquired by the CSA in 1906 from the International Exhibition 1906/07 for £200.
Plate No. 6. The CSA’s 27th annual exhibition in the Durham Street gallery published in the *Weekly Press*, 5 June 1907, following the closure of the International Exhibition in Hagley Park, 30 May 1907.
International Exhibition Art Gallery, with its splendid collection of British pictures, has awakened a public interest in the fine arts greater than ever existed here before, it is probable that the local Society will be still more appreciated.58

This expression of confidence and acknowledgment of the increasing interest in the arts in Canterbury grew over the following years, while the commitment to British art remained evident with the additional purchase of seven works in 1912. The CSA requested six English and six European works on consignment with the Society’s council drawing up a list of more than 40 artists whose art they considered suitable. Included in their inventory were A. Arnesby Brown, Frank Brangwyn, W. Hughes Stanton and J. W. Waterhouse.59 The Society purchased Neils M. Lund’s Glen Dochart, H. H. La Thangue’s Making Ligurian Lace, Arnesby Brown’s On the Uplands, A. Wardle’s Hill Leopards, E. Bundy’s Conspirators, Julius Olssen’s Moonlight and George Henry’s Black Hat.60 Further acquisitions in 1912 included five works by New Zealand artists for £130, with an additional English painting later being purchased from Christchurch art dealer Henry Fisher. These purchases were partially made possible by funding from the central government which voted £500 for allocation to each of the art societies in the four main centres.61

Of the New Zealand works purchased that year, Petrus van der Velden’s Mountain Stream, Otira Gorge highlights the differing values the CSA placed on locally painted landscapes and British equivalents.62 Negotiations for the art works in London extended over a period of seven months and purchases totalled £745. Discussions for the purchase of van der Velden’s painting, owned by businessman Gilbert Anderson (1854-1919), were undertaken in March 1911 with an offer of £50 by the CSA.63 Anderson sought £10064 and finally settled with the Society for £8065 with negotiations extending over 12 months. By comparison, the CSA had little argument paying £150 for Lund’s Glen Dochart. It would be easy in retrospect to accuse the Society of a bias towards British, at the expense of New Zealand art.

58 Ibid
59 CSA minutes, 6 June, 4 July and 1 August 1911.
60 CSA minutes, 12 April, 22 May, 4 June and 3 September 1912.
61 Brown, ‘Contemporary Painting and Public Collections in New Zealand.’
63 CSA minutes 8 March 1911.
64 CSA minutes, 4 July 1911.
65 CSA minutes, 13 March 1912.
Was the lower price offered for van der Velden’s painting an expression of subservience to Britain, its culture and Empire? James Belich has maintained that such an attitude is representative of ‘recolonisation,’ the notion that New Zealand was ‘permanently junior’ to Britain. Belich argues that as the country’s economy became tied to produce exported to Great Britain in the late nineteenth century, a shift occurred in the relationship between the countries. Prior to the 1880s New Zealanders had retained a self-confidence and optimism, considering themselves equal or superior as ‘the Britons of the South.’ However, this association changed and a cultural transformation occurred in which ‘New Zealand no longer aspired to Britain’s greatness, but it did assert co-ownership of that greatness, as a junior partner.’

Belich maintains that nowhere was this more evident than in the enthusiasm for industrial and cultural exhibitions, to which New Zealand appears to have been particularly prone. The scale and success of the International Exhibition in 1906 certainly confirms such observations. The Official Record of the Exhibition, published in 1910, commends New Zealand’s progress in its settlement and industries in the wider context of the British Empire, yet the catalogue noted that the presence of work by 567 British artists was justified because the inclusion of such large numbers ‘raised the whole tone of art in the colony.’ This sentiment was shared by art societies and art collectors in New Zealand and Australia with the total purchase from the 1906 exhibition reaching more than £17,000 worth of British art works. Placed in the context of the acquisition of van der Velden’s painting in 1912, ‘recolonisation’ appears a valid consideration in the development of the CSA’s collection.

However, to assert that lower sums paid for the work of Canterbury artists constrained the development of the fine arts in the province is misleading. While Brown laments the preference for Royal Academy paintings at the expense of local art, he does so retrospectively with a nationalist agenda and as a proponent of a modernism that emerged some 50 years after the International Exhibition. A closer examination of the influence

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67 Belich, p. 21.
68 Belich, p. 77.
69 Belish, p. 83.
70 Cowan, p. 267.
71 Cowan, p. 285.
of British art and its reception in Canterbury demonstrates that it made a significant contribution to the development of the arts and to a nationalist spirit in the first half of the twentieth century. When Seager defended the quality of the CSA’s acquisitions from Thompson’s attacks in 1905, he drew attention to recently purchased work by British artists and emphasised their educational value to Canterbury students of art. His comments mirrored notions about the development of New Zealand art previously articulated by William Mathew Hodgkins who believed that painting would evolve from the observation of the New Zealand landscape in conjunction with a study of suitable examples from the appropriate masters:

The study of landscape in these Colonies is and of necessity must be surrounded with many difficulties. We have not here the advantage of constantly seeing those masterpieces in painting which serve alike to charm the eye and educate the mind, and which are so familiar to all who have lived in the older countries.... The student who wishes, therefore, to be something more than a mere copyist of the scene before him must learn to look at his subject, not only with a painter’s eye, but with those of poet, for it is not sufficient to make a transcript... in Otago especially, where the features of the scene are so varied, where the play of light and shade, the effects of the atmosphere and cloud formation, are so exquisite in their endless changes; and if we do but study these things... bringing always to that study the knowledge acquired by the perusal of such works as have for their object the proper development not only of artistic feeling, but the highest aspirations of our nature, the result will inevitably be that the practice of art in New Zealand will succeed.72

The admiration for British art and the significance assigned to its influence were evident, not only in the sums spent on paintings, but also in the teaching of the staff at Canterbury College School of Art. Reviewing students’ work in 1924, the tutor in drawing and painting, Leonard Booth, emphasised the need to do more than merely accurately render a scene, and cited Frank Brangwyn’s work as a model for learning:

A work of art, however, must be more than a display of executive skill. It must possess aesthetic quality.... A painting was a record of an emotional

experience.... To illustrate his point, Mr. Booth made reference to Frank Branwyn’s [sic] ‘Rajah’s Birthday,’ in which picture all elements, even to the very manner of the brush work, contributed to the impression of the emotional ideas, which was joyousness.... Students of art must learn not only to draw and to paint, but also to formulate, and to express in terms of drawing and painting their aesthetic ideas.73

The example of British art was complemented by the work of Canterbury artists who had travelled abroad, sending paintings of English or European landscapes back to New Zealand for exhibition. In 1932 the Society held more than 30 works by expatriate artists of European and English scenes by artists such as James Cook, Rhona Haszard, Raymond McIntyre, Olivia Spencer-Bower, Stoddart and Thompson. As artists they were encouraged to travel abroad to extend their practice, acquiring valuable experience and knowledge that would later serve to develop New Zealand art. At the opening of the 26th annual exhibition Jennings commented on the quality of the exhibition:

It was only necessary... to look round at the pictures to see the immense advance that had been made in painting in Canterbury during the last few years. A great deal of that advance was due to the number of young painters who had been to England and the Continent, and who had brought back to Canterbury some of the most advanced ideas in painting.74

The importance of suitable role models was also evident in comments made at the presentation of prizes to art students at Canterbury College during the International Exhibition. Referring to arts and crafts in New Zealand, it was acknowledged that tremendous progress had been made in Canterbury. However, caution was expressed over the ability and skill of artists compared to those in Great Britain. The Press referred to the advice of visiting arts coordinator, Longden, and to works in the International Exhibition:

The policy of the Government... is to fit New Zealand workmen to be the best in the world, and the Governors of Canterbury College are certainly doing their best to carry out this policy by placing before the young workmen of the city the

73 Press, 24 August 1924, p. 6.
74 Press, 6 April 1906, p. 5.
opportunity for developing their skill on the best lines of artistic handicraft. Mr Longden, who has an indispensable right to speak with authority on the subject, took occasion to offer a friendly warning. While expressing his admiration at the quality of some of the students’ work, he advised them not to run before they could walk.... The exquisite examples of craftsmanship to be seen in the Art Gallery and the British Court at the Exhibition are not the work of men and women whose grounding in the principles of art has been scamped; they are the fruit of patient study and practice, and New Zealand work, to be as good, must have a similar basis.\footnote{75 \textit{Press}, 12 February 1907, p. 6.}

One could indeed argue that the British art in the CSA’s collection contributed to the growing confidence of the Society in the early twentieth century. A summary of its progress at the opening of the 27\textsuperscript{th} annual exhibition also recognised the critical role played by the International Exhibition in the CSA’s development:

Dr. Jennings gave his audience a good idea of the progress which had been made in the past five years.... Now that the International Exhibition Art Gallery, with its splendid collection of British pictures has awakened a public interest in the fine arts greater than ever existed before, it is probable that the local Society will be still more appreciated.\footnote{76 \textit{Press}, 31 May 1907, p. 6.}

In view of the large sum spent by the CSA in acquiring works from the International Exhibition, it may have been anticipated that there would be little discretionary income left among those who supported the arts in Christchurch. However, at the close of its annual exhibition in 1907 the Society recorded a record turnover in sales of works by New Zealand artists of £700. The CSA was adamant that this interest in the arts had been stimulated by Canterbury’s progressive prosperity and the recent enthusiasm for the International Exhibition.\footnote{77 \textit{Press}, 1 July 1907, p. 5.} Undoubtedly, 1906 had been a good year for public interest in the arts in Canterbury. In addition to the International Exhibition, a touring show of William Holman Hunt’s \textit{The Light of the World} had attracted 45,000 visitors to the CSA gallery in May that year, and when this painting was also included in the International Exhibition from November 1906 to April 1907 it was estimated to have be viewed by one...
and a half million people. Recognising the popularity of such art, the Society organised its own exhibition of British and European art works in 1909. Canterbury residents were invited to lend work to it and favourable comparisons with the International Exhibition were made, particularly in relation to its educational value for art students and the development of their work through the example of original paintings:

...to develop interest in art anything that helps must be of advantage to artists, since it tends to create or develop that artistic taste that is not satisfied with chromos or the cheap and often nasty engravings that are so painfully common nowadays. A love of good pictures, like a love of good music, grows by what it feeds on, until the tawdry and commonplace that once satisfied the student’s artistic sense become intolerably distasteful. The coming Loan Exhibition of pictures will undoubtedly have an educational value second only, so far as Canterbury is concerned, to the great attractions of the New Zealand Exhibition.

As the Society’s confidence in its ability to nurture the arts in Canterbury grew, the CSA placed increasing pressure on the City Council for financial support. At the closing of the annual exhibition in 1907, Jennings called for local government to provide an annual grant to assist the CSA in its activities. He referred specifically to the valuable collection of British art works now held by the Society:

The revival in art... is not a sudden thing. It has been growing amongst us for five or six years, though there is no doubt that it has been stimulated by the advent of the splendid art collection at the International Exhibition.... I think the time has come when the City Council should assist the Society of Arts by a yearly contribution.... Now that we have, in the new pictures from England, such a fine addition to our permanent gallery... we are more than ever desirous of giving artistic pleasure to as many of our fellow citizens as possible.

This was followed by a formal submission to the City Council which received endorsement in a Press editorial:

79 Press, 16 October 1909, p. 9.
80 Press, 1 July 1907, p. 5.
81 CSA minutes, 12 July 1907.
The Christchurch City Council up to the present has been singularly backward in providing for the intellectual needs of the community. We owe our library to the founders of Canterbury College, and the other day, when the Board of Governors suggested the propriety of the City Council contributing to the upkeep of the library the request was refused. We trust it will not prove itself equally unsympathetic in the matter of art. We take it that a City Council does not discharge its highest mission unless it assists in the intellectual development of the people, and if our local rulers only made a grant sufficient to add one or two good pictures a year to the Gallery they would at any rate show that they were recognising a higher duty than that of merely looking after the streets and footpaths and drains of the city, excellent and necessary as is this portion of their work.\(^{82}\)

The Society repeated its appeal for assistance in 1909, asking that the City Council match the CSA’s financial contribution that year for the purchase of work.\(^{83}\) However, it was not until 1911 that the City Council agreed to provide annual funding of £50 for the purchase of art works. Accordingly, the Society issued a circular to artists advising them of the grant.\(^{84}\) Although Brown claimed that the acquisition of the British art works, hindered the development of New Zealand art, the history of the CSA’s collection until 1912 does not support his argument. It can be maintained that the Royal Academy paintings in the Society’s collection contributed towards support for the acquisition of work by local artists through the CSA’s success in securing annual funding for such purchases from the City Council.

The grant was welcomed by the CSA with good reason. Compared to Auckland, Wellington and Otago, Canterbury lacked major arts patrons. The CSA was largely dependent on its own resources to secure works. Large donations from individuals were the exception, although mention must be made of Garsia, Hall, Harris, Jamieson, J. T. Peacock, Reece, Lady Rhodes, Major Archibald Spencer, and Stevens for their important gifts of art works or funds. Usually, however, work acquired for the collection was secured by other means: revenue generated from sales at the annual exhibitions,

\(^{82}\) *Press*, 1 July 1907, p. 6.

\(^{83}\) *Press*, 19 March 1909, p. 7

\(^{84}\) CSA minutes, 6 June 1911 and *Press*, 29 November 1911, p. 2.
debentures taken out by CSA council members and supporters, public subscriptions, donations, the City Council’s annual grant and government grants in 1907\(^8^5\) and 1910.\(^8^6\)

By contrast, the Auckland City Art Gallery’s collection was immediately established with the donation of 53 art works by Sir George Grey, and was consolidated in 1885 through the bequest of James Tannock Mackelvie. This provided funding alongside numerous British and European art works, including oil paintings, prints, watercolours, sculptures, books and decorative arts.\(^8^7\) Adequately housing both collections was fundamental to the building of the nation’s first public art gallery in Auckland in 1885.\(^8^8\)

In Wellington the NZAFA initially shared the CSA’s need to fundraise for the purchase of work, relying on subscriptions from its membership and the public. This ensured the acquisition of work by local artists such as James Nairn.\(^8^9\) With the intentions later expressed by the government to establish a national gallery in Wellington and the generosity of benefactors, the NZAFA’s collection received a greater level of support than the CSA’s. In 1906 a government grant of £500 was allocated to the purchase of work from the International Exhibition and in addition, £800 raised through public subscriptions was spent on British paintings acquired in London.\(^9^0\) These acquisitions were consolidated in 1911 with the organisation of a survey show of British art in Wellington. The exhibition followed the government’s announcement to establish a national art gallery in the capital\(^9^1\) and the NZAFA arranged for 400 art works to be dispatched from London for possible purchase.\(^9^2\) The Academy enthusiastically acquired works from this exhibition, after securing £1,100 made up of a government grant of £500 and £600 from public subscriptions. This was followed in 1912 by a donation from the George Macarthy Trust for the purchase of art works, and in 1922 an anonymous donor gifted a large collection of paintings by van der Velden to the Academy.\(^9^3\) An additional important donation followed in 1923 when Sir Harold Beauchamp announced that his

\(^{85}\) CSA minutes, 18 December 1907.
\(^{86}\) CSA minutes, 6 December 1910.
\(^{88}\) Brown, ‘Contemporary Painting and Public Collections in New Zealand,’ unpaginated.
\(^{90}\) Kay and Eden, p. 50.
\(^{91}\) Brown, ‘Contemporary Painting and Public Collections in New Zealand,’ unpaginated.
\(^{92}\) Ibid.
\(^{93}\) Kay and Eden, p. 65.
Fitzherbert Terrace home in Wellington could be sold and the proceeds put towards the purchase of pictures for the national art gallery. This fund eventually reached £20,000.\(^94\)

Dunedin was equally fortunate in the support of benefactors including businessman and banker Alexander Bathgate, lawyer D’arcy Haggitt, and leading advocate for a public art gallery, Isabella, Lady McLean, who all contributed significant funds towards the purchase of art works.\(^95\) Moreover, the burden of debt that accompanied the opening of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery in 1907\(^96\) was relieved with a bequest from historian and academic, Dr Thomas Morland Hocken of £800.\(^97\) Most importantly however, in 1919 the gallery received a significant donation from the estate of Peter Smeaton of £10,000, with interest available to purchase art works annually up to £600. Smeaton’s generosity ensured that Dunedin had an annual grant for the acquisition of art works more substantial and consistent than any other gallery in New Zealand. However, the bequest was also accompanied by the significant condition that only British works were to be acquired for the first twenty years. Undoubtedly Smeaton’s donation shaped the Dunedin Public Art Gallery’s by no means unimpressive collection of British and European art.\(^98\)

The annual grant provided to the CSA by the City Council from 1912 was also to influence the development of its collection, drawing attention to the acquisition of work by local artists. Brown recognised that the works presented to the Robert McDougall Art Gallery in 1932 included the best public collection of New Zealand art up to the early 1930s:

> From the three major art galleries to be erected between the wars... the one institution to benefit most in terms of pictures painted during this period, and presented by the local art society, was the Robert McDougall Art Gallery.\(^99\)

Certainly, the predominance of New Zealand works in the CSA’s collection from 1912 to the early 1930s was in notable contrast to those of other societies. In Auckland the dominance of the Mackelvie collection meant that by the end of the nineteenth century

\(^{94}\) Kay and Eden, p. 90.
\(^{95}\) Entwisle, Treasures, p. 13.
\(^{96}\) Entwisle, Treasures, p. 16.
\(^{97}\) Ibid.
\(^{98}\) Entwisle, Treasures, p.17.
\(^{99}\) Brown, ‘Contemporary Painting and Public Collections in New Zealand,’ unpaginated.
the gallery owned very little else,\textsuperscript{100} while in Dunedin the conditions of the Smeaton bequest initially prevented funds being allocated for the acquisition of contemporary New Zealand art. This is not to suggest that the CSA did not share the ambitions and values of other societies in its appreciation of British art. However, in Christchurch from 1912 the conditions of the annual grant stipulated that it be utilised for acquiring work by New Zealand artists and this directed the CSA towards purchases from their annual exhibitions.\textsuperscript{101} By 1932 acquisitions included paintings by Grace Butler, Russell Clark, James Cook, Rhona Haszard, Elizabeth Kelly, Archibald Nicoll, H. Linley Richardson, Olivia Spencer-Bower, Sydney Thompson, John Weeks, and Cora Wilding.

The first purchases made by the Society with the City Council grant in 1912 were by expatriate Canterbury painter, Edwin Bartley, C. E. Bickerton, Elizabeth Kelly and Stoddart. These works appear to have been well received. However, the following year, \textit{Up For Repairs} by Richard Wallwork (Plate 7), was purchased with the full amount of the grant and protracted debate immediately followed in the newspapers. Wallwork was an artist from Manchester who had graduated from the Royal College of Art and was appointed Life Master at the Canterbury College of Art, taking up the position in 1911.\textsuperscript{102} \textit{Up For Repairs} was painted in 1912, following a visit to Stewart Island. The question that was raised following its acquisition was whether it was by a New Zealand artist, according to the conditions of the grant.\textsuperscript{103} The initiative for this annual bequest had come from the previous Mayor of Christchurch, Thomas Edward Taylor, who had a genuine interest in the fine arts, having served briefly as a CSA council member.\textsuperscript{104} If the grant was intended ‘for the purpose of encouraging the New Zealand artist, and of forming the nucleus of a national collection,’\textsuperscript{105} was Wallwork’s painting a suitable choice? A letter to the \textit{Press} argued that he was not a New Zealander and that the CSA’s decision was typical of its lack of support for Canterbury artists:

\begin{quote}
For years the Council of the Art Society has seemingly done its best to discourage the young New Zealander who has chosen an art career. While the Art
\end{quote}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{101} At least 30 paintings were purchased with the Christchurch City Council grant from 1912 to 1931.
\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Press}, 27 March 1912, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{104} \textit{Press}, 24 March 1914, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{105} \textit{Ibid.}
\end{flushleft}
Plate No. 7. Richard Wallwork, *Up For Repairs*, 1912, Oil on Canvas, 1241mm x 1854mm. This painting was purchased by the CSA in 1913 from its 33rd annual exhibition for £50 with the grant from the Christchurch City Council.
Society has spent large sums from time to time in acquiring pictures by English artists... the Society has spent comparatively very little indeed, in the purchase of pictures by New Zealand artists. Quite recently the Art Society received a grant of £500 from the Government, and spent every penny of it on pictures by English artists. In consequence of this policy of our Art Council, one after another of our New Zealand artists are leaving for the Old World.... Surely this, the policy of the Council of the Art Society is not calculated to develop a national art. It is to be hoped that the Mayor and his associates will see that this comparatively small sum of £50 be spent on pictures by artists who are bona-fide New Zealanders.... The City Council ought to define its meaning of the term “New Zealand artists,” and the term, if it is to have any meaning at all, ought to embrace only those who are natives of this country, or who at least, have resided in New Zealand for upwards of, say, five years.106

In response to such questions, the City Council provided a definition of a New Zealand artist as a guide for the Society. Suggestions were made that purchases should be confined to those who had resided in the country for at least ten years or who had trained in the Dominion.107 City councillor and leader of the Labour movement in Christchurch, Hiriam Hunter, believed that the award was for the encouragement of students and not masters and that “no artist who had not spent some part of his training in the Dominion could be considered.”108 The CSA council members, represented by Jennings and Jamieson, met the City Council prior to selecting works for purchase at the 34th annual exhibition but could not reach agreement as to the parameters of the grant.109 However, some level of consensus was achieved the following year with Jamieson and Seager representing the CSA alongside nominees from the City Council, following the short-listing of appropriate works for purchase. The Society also sought to define a New Zealand artist for the purposes of the grant as “One who has resided here for three years or more, and is practising art in New Zealand.”110

The debate that followed drew attention to the country’s art, and broader questions of

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106 *Press*, 27 March 1913, p. 4.
108 CSA minutes 30 March 1914.
109 Ibid.
110 CSA minutes, 16 March 1915.
nationalism and identity were discussed in the newspapers. ‘Social Democrat’ ingeniously noted:

I think the City Council quite justified in their action with regard to the £50 given to the Art Society, but somewhat quite illogical. It should take a firm stand. No picture, unless of New Zealand scenery, by an artist actually born and educated in Christchurch. They also subsidise a band or bands. Therefore, no music unless played on instruments made in New Zealand, the compositions to be by New Zealand composers, and the musicians all to be born and educated in Christchurch…. In this way a race of artists, musicians, and authors would be raised whose like, one can confidently predict, could not be found elsewhere. \[111\]

These comments highlighted the complexity of the issue which, although now in the public arena, was not entirely new. Although the Society was committed to nurturing New Zealand art and education through the example of British models, the purchase of work by local artists also clearly expressed this belief. However, the extent of such encouragement had not always been evident to its working members. Challenging the merits of the cost and need to extend the Society’s Armagh Street gallery in 1892, working member Thornhill Cooper had tabled a meeting with the CSA council demanding greater support from the CSA for its artists. He made three requests: gallery extensions be postponed, art unions be reinstated to encourage an increase in the acquisition of art works by local artists from exhibitions and, in criticism of the Society’s admiration for British art;

That inasmuch as last year certain works by English artists were exhibited and sold by the society it be a recommendation to the council that no work of an artist residing abroad shall be exhibited for sale by the society except when such artists have formerly been resident in this colony and in membership with [the] same… art society. \[112\]

Cooper proposed that the Society’s attention should focus more upon support for artists resident in New Zealand to the exclusion of British painting from exhibition and sale. However, while his motions for a delay in the gallery’s renovation and the reinstatement

\[111\] Press, 19 March 1914, p. 5.
\[112\] CSA minutes, 20 September 1892.
of art unions were publicly debated, his request for the omission of work by British artists was an issue that was resolved behind closed doors. The expression of such sentiment in 1892 is noteworthy and by 1912 it had become central to the debate over the grant, with further difficulties in establishing a definition of a New Zealand artist now clearly evident. Highly critical of the CSA, Hunter defended the City Council’s stand and request for limitations on the grant:

I am a New Zealander myself, and am going to do my best to foster the national spirit. We have hung on to our Mother Country’s apron-strings too long in many respects. I may not know much about art, but I reckon I do know what constitutes a New Zealand artist.

Claims were also made that the CSA, like other art societies, was perceived to be doing very little to support New Zealand art:

It is surely true that the most is done to discourage the national spirit in Art in this land: our societies are busy, our Art instructors are imported, presumably because of the influence of meaningless degrees, our artists are not recognised, and our students are industriously copying the individualities of the works of “Brangwyn,” “Rackham,” and “Dulac.”

The presence of indigenous art and the elitist nature of the arts were also highlighted:

there is only one definite form of New Zealand Art - that is Maori Art. To be logical, that is the only form of Art we should support; but if we must be illogical, and administer pap paid out of the rates, to a privileged few, there is at least no reason why we should bolster up our inanity with misstatements.

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113 Press, 5 October 1892, p. 3. The Press reported that working members of the Society had waited upon the Council and produced three resolutions that had been passed. One resolution had been settled by the Council to the satisfaction of the deputation.


115 Press, 23 March 1914, p. 9.

116 Press, 24 March 1914, p. 3.

117 Press, 30 March 1914, p. 2.
The City Council's role in the arts, and its decisions about such matters, were debated and attention was drawn to the uneasy precedent set by its objections to the purchase of Wallwork's painting.\textsuperscript{118}

In nine cases out of ten when a local body deals with art it gets beyond its depth, and is apt to flounder rather badly. There is, of course no reason why a member of a local art body should not know something about art, but the fact is that comparatively few members do. This would not matter much if they would only realise their limitations. It is curious that while men will hesitate to question the special knowledge of an engineer about drains or bridge-building, they do not hesitate to express opinions on the huge and difficult question of art.\textsuperscript{119}

To the CSA's detractors, both the number of British works in the collection and the number of artists who had left Christchurch to develop careers abroad were issues of concern. Hunter was particularly troubled by the amount of money spent on British acquisitions at the perceived expense of local artists. The walls of the CSA gallery were 'covered for the most part with English pictures.'\textsuperscript{120}

I wish only to ensure that the New Zealand artists get their due and if all I hear is true they have had anything but that in the past. The only way to raise the standard of art in any country, to develop a national art, is to encourage and develop the artists. The artists must produce the art and the art must be national. No country can develop art by importing works of art. The local Art Council spent recently £500 of public money in purchasing English pictures, and has spent thousands of pounds in past years. Now it grudges £50 per year to encourage our own native artists.\textsuperscript{121}

Hunter challenged the Society to produce a list of the number and value of 'foreign' art works in the collection and place this against the local art works, maintaining that such lists 'would be an eye-opener to the general public.'\textsuperscript{122} Not surprisingly, his comments were met with a reply from a CSA supporter that encouragement of the arts involved

\textsuperscript{118} Press, 18 March 1914, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{119} Press, 18 March 1914, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{120} Press, 24 March 1914, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{121} Press, 23 March 1914, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{122} Press, 24 March 1914, p. 3.
more than simply purchasing New Zealand works. Central to the CSA’s permanent collection and the development of art was the role of education and the capacity for examples of British art to serve as models for students and the public:

Artists are educated by the study of the best works of art available to them. They develop like most other individuals in the face of competition, and the worst form of encouragement is to reduce the competitions by eliminating first-class works.¹²³

Debate also ensued over the reasons for artists to study overseas. Critics of the Society maintained that the institution’s failure to support local artists was paramount, and that individuals who were neglected locally frequently went on to achieve a level of international recognition. Hunter singled out Thompson and Raymond McIntyre as examples¹²⁴ and McIntyre’s perceived neglect was also commented upon by the public.¹²⁵

Ironically, although the CSA was severely criticised for its perceived inability to further New Zealand art, the public debate provoked by its actions was characterised by a growing spirit of nationalism and confidence in the fine arts. Most immediately, this was apparent in how Wallwork’s *Up for Repairs* drew attention to questions about the state of the arts in New Zealand and national identity. Perceptions about the painting reflected a wider expression of confidence in art and culture in Canterbury that had developed following the successful International Exhibition seven years previously. The record value of paintings sold at the CSA’s annual exhibition in 1907 was almost matched by sales in April 1914.¹²⁶ In addition, confidence in the work of local artists was expressed in reviews of annual exhibitions that now drew favourable comparison with the work of British art. In 1911 the *Lytelton Times* proudly observed that the best works on exhibition equalled those of Great Britain:

by far the best work has been done by New Zealand artists, and that, apparently, it is unnecessary to look to outside for Old Country talent for work to grace the

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¹²⁶ *Press*, 20 April 1914, p. 6. Sales of art works totalled £660.
Society’s walls. In portraiture and landscape especially, many works are shown which would hold their own in any exhibition in the Old Country.127

A solo exhibition at the CSA gallery in 1911 of work by Margaret Stoddart had also stimulated favourable associations between art from abroad and New Zealand. She was praised for her response to the local environment with work that was neither grand nor sublime but which responded sensitively to the Diamond Harbour region, showing that it was ‘surprisingly rich in beauty spots.’128 At the opening of the 32nd annual exhibition of the Society in 1912, the Press confidently named the local artists whose work it perceived was ‘outstanding.’ The list included C. F. Goldie, Elizabeth Kelly, Thompson, Wallwork, and Walsh.129 Wallwork’s Up For Repairs was purchased in an environment reflecting this confidence. The annual exhibition of the CSA in 1913 was characterised by strong attendances and sales.130 In such an atmosphere it is not surprising that questions were raised regarding the CSA’s collection and whether it was a genuine expression of the province’s art, encompassing the work of artists who were supported by the Society and who responded to the local landscape.

This spirit of nationalism is also noteworthy as it predates the outbreak of the First World War, suggesting that the country was already developing a greater sense of identity. Given its traumatic impact, it is not surprising that between 1914 and 1919 the CSA conceded to the City Council’s policy, purchasing eight works by local artists from its annual exhibitions. Nor was it surprising that from 1920, in a spirit of nationalism, the City Council stipulated that the grant must only be used to acquire works by artists born in New Zealand. An editorial in the Press attacked this decision:

It [excludes] a number of artists of ability who are always regarded as New Zealanders, because they came here when they were young, made their homes here, and, in a majority of cases, received most, if not all, of their artistic training here. In many respects, “New Zealander for New Zealanders” is a good motto. But suppose it were to be construed as “New Zealand for New Zealand-born – and no others”; suppose that in pursuance of this principle anyone born outside

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127 Lyttelton Times, 17 March 1911, p. 5.
128 Lyttelton Times, 24 October 1911, p. 5.
130 Press, 12 April 1913, p. 15. Eighty paintings were sold for a total of £500.
the Dominion was pronounced incapable of sitting in Parliament or on local bodies, of becoming a judge... or even holding any position in the public service... The Council proudly thinks, no doubt, that in making such a grant it is encouraging Art; as a matter of fact it is helping to discourage it, because if education in the right principles of art is to be gained or strengthened by the sight of pictures in our Art Gallery, then this cannot be brought about if the range of the Council’s selection is very narrow.... New Zealand has produced among its native-born good writers, doctors, lawyers, teachers, and so on, but it would never have attained its present position as a civilised, cultured community if for the last generation the positions occupied by educated men in the community had been reserved exclusively for those born in the Dominion.131

In recognising the good intentions of the City Council, and qualifying these by acknowledging the contribution that Britain continued to make to New Zealand society, attention was again drawn to the educational role of the CSA’s collection, as well as the complexity of the issues surrounding national identity.

Although the Press questioned the restraints now placed upon the grant, the CSA did not appear to have been overly concerned that these new conditions altered the way in which it would administer the funds. In purchasing Grace Butler’s Evening Glow from the annual exhibition in 1920, the Society short-listed a number of paintings, submitting these to the City Council representatives for final discussion. No expression of unease from the CSA council was recorded in the minutes.132 In addition, the City Council minutes from March 1920 acknowledged a letter from the Society stating that the painting has been acquired with the grant and confirmed that Butler was ‘a New Zealand born artist.’133 By 1919, the Society appears to have confidently recognised that the value of the grant lay primarily in the development of the collection through the purchase of contemporary works by local artists. Symptomatic of this, was the response to the presentation of an unidentified historical ‘portrait of an old woman’ for consideration for the collection in 1924. This was declined because ‘while acknowledging the fine quality of the work it was agreed... that the main object at present was the collection of pictures...

132 CSA minutes, 3 March 1920.
by contemporary artists. In addition, the Society seems to have been able to allocate the City Council funds with a reasonable degree of leeway. Although Wallwork's *The Marble Shrine* did not fit the terms of the grant, the Society purchased the work in 1923 with a contribution from both the CSA and the City Council.

The Society's allocation of the annual grant towards the acquisition of work by New Zealand artists did not however, mean that British art was now considered unimportant. Although the CSA did not allocate funds for the purchase of British art works to the same extent as in 1907, they continued to be acquired through purchases and bequests. In 1927 the Society was presented with *Teddington* by Sir David Murray and in the following year an exhibition of touring British art was held at the CSA gallery with consideration given to further selection of work for the permanent collection. The oil paintings, water-colours and etchings on exhibition had been toured to New Zealand by expatriate Murray Fuller, who had selected them in consultation with Sir William Orpen. They included the work of no fewer than eleven Royal Academicians, as well as members of art societies, 'of the highest standing.' The Press stated that:

Mr. E. Murray Fuller went to England specially to select them, not to the art dealers but into the studios of some of the most distinguished painters of the day. He has done his work well, for he has brought to New Zealand such a collection of pictures as has rarely been seen before in Christchurch.... It will be surprising if public appreciation does not result in many of them finding their way into Christchurch homes.

Such acclaim is comparable with descriptions of the paintings in the International Exhibition in 1906. However, the CSA's enthusiasm for the work in 1928 was cautious in comparison, with the single acquisition of *River Mackne, South Wales* by S. J. Lamorna Birch for £63.0.0.

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134 CSA minutes, 5 February 1924.
135 CSA minutes, 6 March 1923.
136 CSA minutes, 15 February 1927.
138 *Ibid*.
139 *Press*, 27 July 1928, p. 3. Birch is listed as a participating artist in the exhibition which opened late July at the CSA gallery.
140 CSA minutes, 2 August 1928. This painting is now in the collection of the Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu.
The most significant expression of admiration for British art during this period was made by the Society for Imperial Culture (SFIC) in 1930. The Society shared many of the principles and objectives of the CSA and had been formed in 1922 for the advancement of culture, embarking on a range of activities, including travelling scholarships for artists and the purchase of art works for a public collection. At the SFIC annual general meeting in 1930 it was proposed that a loan exhibition of English paintings be secured and displayed in the new McDougall Gallery. The proposal was put forward by Professor of Education at Canterbury College, James Shelley (1884-1961), and was well received at its annual general meeting. Shelley stated that Britain held an excessive number of works of quality that could be put to good use in New Zealand. Such an exhibition would occupy the McDougall Gallery during the first year of its operation, prior to the installation of the CSA’s collection. He asserted:

There could not be a better way of opening the new Art Gallery than with a loan collection of pictures from England. Then we could have another opening the next year with our own pictures, and collect money on both occasions.

The SFIC proposed to form a deputation to meet with the CSA and the City Council for further discussions. However, the possibility of such an exhibition delaying the relocation of the CSA’s collection from its gallery, and the associated costs of importing art works from Great Britain, probably outweighed support for the proposal. Although valuing and continuing to purchase art works from Great Britain, the CSA’s commitment to the fine arts in Canterbury increasingly encompassed further practical concerns such as the care and storage of its collection, the ongoing maintenance of its own gallery, the completion and opening of the McDougall Gallery, and future retention of control over the art works to be gifted to the city. Thus, the SFIC’s proposal remained unrealised. However, it acts as a reminder of the status that British art maintained in Canterbury, a situation that applied until well after the Second World War. In 1932, when a further exhibition of British art toured by Fuller visited Christchurch, the CSA council expressed

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141 Roberts, *Concise History*, p. 48.
144 Ibid.
an enthusiasm for the purchase of work. The Society resolved that a letter be sent to the City Council requesting that art works be acquired, and that ‘a public list be opened by the Society for subscriptions towards the purchase of a picture or pictures... for presentation to the McDougall Gallery.’ Subsequently, the Society acquired James Durden’s *A Blue Room in Kensington* for £26.5.0 and presented it to the new gallery prior to its opening,\(^{145}\) while also acquiring etchings from the touring exhibition for its own collection.\(^{146}\)

The selection of works for the McDougall Gallery took place after the building’s completion in February 1932, and following discussions between the CSA council and the Mayor of Christchurch, D. G. Sullivan.\(^{147}\) In December 1931 the Society prepared for the transfer of its collection through the formation of a sub-committee of artist members. It drew up a report on the condition of the art works and detailed any restoration required prior to their presentation to the city.\(^{148}\) However, even by February 1932 no decision appears to have been made regarding which art works would go to the McDougall Gallery. No doubt this was primarily because the presentation of the collection was subject to the establishment of a mutual agreement between the CSA and the City Council. The Society proceeded with caution as it sought to retain a level of authority over its collection prior to de-accession. Moreover, although the gallery building was completed by the end of February, an opening date was not to be established until it was cleaned, refurbished, and the art works installed. It was noted that ‘the selection of the most suitable pictures... might take some little time.’\(^{149}\)

The filling of the new building with gems of art is a matter which is exercising a considerable amount of thought on the part of the civic authorities and members of the Canterbury Art Society.... Definite plans as to just what pictures will be transferred from the old Art Gallery to the new premises have not yet been formulated.\(^{150}\)

\(^{145}\) CSA minutes, 14 June 1932 and *Press*, 16 June 1932, p. 3.
\(^{146}\) CSA minutes, 31 May 1932.
\(^{147}\) *Christchurch Times*, 10 February 1932, p. 3.
\(^{148}\) CSA minutes, 21 December 1931.
\(^{149}\) *Press*, 5 February 1932, p. 8.
\(^{150}\) *Ibid.*
When requested by the Town Clerk, J. S. Neville, less than six weeks before the opening for the details of any sculptures for which display stands would be needed, the CSA provided a list of three dimensional works, but did not finalise which of these would be presented to the new gallery.\textsuperscript{151} In addition, expectations that the art works purchased with the annual public grant should be placed in the new gallery were not entirely fulfilled. A significant number remained in the Armagh and Durham Street gallery, including Bickerton’s \textit{The Lilac Sunbonnet}, Grace Butler’s \textit{The Beach, New Brighton}, Cecil Kelly’s \textit{The Valley of the Otira}, and Wallwork’s \textit{Up For Repairs}.\textsuperscript{152}

How was the final selection of works made, and who was responsible? The CSA committee that met with the Mayor in February 1932 consisted of Heathcote Helmore, E. C. Huie, Lester, Archibald Nicoll, Wallwork and McGregor Wright.\textsuperscript{153} Agreement was reached that a governing body of three CSA council members and four City Council representatives be formed to coordinate the handing over of the collection and the administration of the new gallery. The CSA would retain curatorial management of the collection in consultation with the City Council. Both parties accepted that:

\begin{quote}
If from time to time the controlling body of the McDougall Gallery judge that any picture or pictures so presented be not up to standard at that time the body shall have the power to return the picture or pictures to the art society for their collection.\textsuperscript{154}
\end{quote}

Further checks were also established ensuring that responsibilities for the McDougall Gallery’s administration were clearly defined:

\begin{quote}
The town clerk [Neville] wrote as follows:
“I have to inform you that at the meeting of the council held on the 10\textsuperscript{th} inst (15th) the suggestions which were submitted to representatives of your society regarding the management of the new art gallery were approved. The council has therefore decided as follows:
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{151} CSA minutes, 26 April 1932. The list includes Kathleen Scott’s bust of Captain Robert Falcon Scott and F. Saul’s \textit{Prayer}, neither of which were presented to the city in 1932.
\textsuperscript{152} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{153} \textit{Christchurch Times}, 10 February 1932, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{154} CSA minutes, 2 February 1932.
1. That a standing committee be set up, to be known as the art gallery committee, consisting of four representatives of the Christchurch City Council and three representatives of the Canterbury Society of Arts. The terms of the office of all members of the committee to coincide with the councillors terms of office.

2. That a sub-committee consisting of the representatives of the Canterbury Society of Arts be appointed to deal with the technical and artistic side of the work. The sub committee to inspect all pictures and decide which are of sufficient merit to be hung in the art gallery.

3. The control of the finances to be solely in the hands of the city council representatives.

4. The Canterbury Society of Arts to be asked to select and hand over from its collection such pictures as it deems suitable for hanging in the art gallery.

5. In the event of any picture which was formerly owned by the Canterbury Society of Arts being removed from the walls of the gallery, the society have the right of re-hanging it in the old gallery."155

Lester, Wallwork and Nicoll assumed the key responsibilities for the selection of works for the McDougall Gallery.156 They were well qualified to do so. In addition to his position as president, Lester had reviewed the CSA’s annual exhibitions in the Press for a number of years, while Wallwork was Director of Canterbury College School of Art,157 succeeding Nicoll in 1927.158 From the exhibition catalogue published in 1933 detailing the collection in the McDougall Gallery, it is evident that in addition to art works specifically gifted by prominent Canterbury residents, the CSA sub-committee selected the majority of the permanent collection’s most important works by British and New Zealand artists.

The CSA’s permanent collection dominated the new gallery, and although criticised forty years later for omissions and inconsistencies, it was unified by its commitment to education in the arts, to the betterment of both practitioners and the general public, and to the development and promotion of the arts in Canterbury. This is readily apparent in the

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155 CSA minutes, 23 February 1932.
156 Christchurch City Council minutes, 16 May 1932, No. 1 minute book, Archives New Zealand.
157 Roberts, Wallwork, p. 28.
acquisition of a significant body of Royal Academy paintings, which the Society believed would contribute to the development of the arts locally, alongside works by New Zealand artists purchased from the Society’s annual exhibitions. Maintaining an obligation to the art and culture of both countries proved a demanding task, and varying opinions on the relevance of the Society’s purchases revealed the complexities of Canterbury’s and New Zealand’s cultural and national identities. For the CSA, such questions, to a certain extent, were apparent from the purchase of its first work in 1881 as it sought to fulfil its objectives ‘to promote the study, practice, and cultivation of the fine arts in New Zealand.’ As a significant work by the most popular and successful painter in Canterbury in the 1880s, Gibb’s *Shades of Evening – The Estuary* had been an ideal choice. Its purchase revealed a self-conscious awareness of grand intentions to cultivate and collect art works that exemplified a community committed to an emerging high culture. In turn, the later acquisition of works by Canterbury artists such as Clark, Haszard, Nicoll, and Thompson ensured that the CSA continued to consolidate such policies and principles. However, the extent of the Society’s contribution to the establishment of the McDougall Gallery involved more than the presentation of an art collection and the provision of ongoing expertise to the City Council. Consideration of the CSA’s exhibition rooms and galleries from 1880 to 1932, and its endeavours to establish a public art gallery for its permanent collection, will be made in the following chapter. This reveals that the establishment of the McDougall Gallery also represented the foundation of a new CSA gallery.
Chapter Three. Housing the Pictures in a Substantial and Cosy Gallery.

The CSA’s first exhibition opened on 17 January 1881 and was held in Christchurch Boys’ High School on Worcester Street. (Plate 8) The building was provided free of charge to the Society for 24 days by the Board of Governors of Canterbury College,¹ and appears to have been remarkably suitable as a temporary art gallery. It was praised for its spaciousness and lighting, rendering it ‘all that can be wished for exhibition purposes,’² with the hanging committee also being congratulated for ensuring that ‘nearly every picture may be studied under an advantageous light.’³

The school was the first of seven premises used by the CSA from 1881 to 1931 for its annual exhibitions and the display and storage of its permanent collection. This involved the practical demands of maintaining the most fitting building to undertake such activities, which became increasingly demanding as the Society’s collection grew. The CSA’s councils vigorously addressed these challenges and supervised the building of a permanent art gallery as early as 1890. A consideration of the Society’s temporary premises from 1880 to 1889, its gallery in Armagh and Durham streets, and its ambitions for a public gallery for its permanent collection, reveals the CSA’s critical role in founding not only a public collection but also a substantial infrastructure for the arts in Christchurch. The Armagh and Durham Street gallery is frequently recognised as the building in which the Society showcased its working members’ paintings and its collection until the opening of its Gloucester Street gallery in 1968.⁴ However, an examination of its role in establishing the Robert McDougall Art Gallery through the pressure that it had placed on City Councils over the previous twenty years prior to its opening in 1932, confirms that the new public building also acted as the Society’s gallery through its display of a substantial portion of the Society’s collection.

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¹ CSA annual report 1880-81.
² *Press*, 18 January 1881, p. 3.
³ *Lyttelton Times*, 18 January 1881, p. 4.
Although praised as a location for the CSA’s first exhibition, the limitations of Christchurch Boys’ High School were evident even in 1881. In addition, a suitable building was also required to store Gibb’s *Shades of Evening – The Estuary* and any further acquisitions. This dilemma was solved by Haast who allowed the work and subsequent purchases to be hung in the Museum.\(^5\) The school’s conflicting uses as a classroom and temporary gallery inevitably created difficulties, and the resignation of Tancred as CSA president in 1882 may have also limited the Society’s further use of the building.\(^6\) Required to find new premises for its third annual exhibition, the CSA council secured rooms in January 1883, leasing Anderson’s building at 209 Cashel Street at £20 for two weeks, and delaying its annual exhibition until April 1883.\(^7\) However, concerns that the new rooms were unsuitable soon became apparent. The *Lyttelton Times* observed:

\[\ldots\] the light is exceptionally trying. There are so many cross lights on the majority of the paintings as there are scientific opinions as to the present habitation of the lost tribe of Israel… Much might have been done in the way of modifying the terribly harsh light that strikes in low blinds across the lower half of the window.\(^8\)

The CSA was equally dissatisfied and in 1885 the fifth annual exhibition was held above Simpson and William’s bookshop at 214 High Street. (Plate 9) The Society was pleased with the new gallery which included a more extensive exhibition space. The larger room ‘was in every way an improvement on previous years,’\(^9\) and the *Lyttelton Times* praised the new venue:

Disagreeable cross-lights are absent, and though the light is, at times, a little trying for paintings hung close to the window, the place is, on the whole, well adapted for the purpose to which it is put.\(^10\)

\(^5\) CSA Annual Report, 1880-81 and CSA minutes, 18 September 1882.
\(^6\) Tancred was CSA president from 1880 to 1882 and served on the Board of Governors of Canterbury College from 1873 to 1884.
\(^7\) CSA minutes, 30 January and 20 March 1883.
\(^8\) *Lyttelton Times*, 27 February 1883, p. 6.
\(^10\) *Lyttelton Times*, 4 March 1885, p. 5.
Plate No. 9. The top floor of the Simpson and William’s bookshop at 214 High Street (immediately behind the seated coachman in this photograph) was used by the CSA for its annual exhibitions from 1885 until 1888. The Society moved its collection from the Museum to the High Street building in April 1886, allowing the paintings to be displayed throughout the year.
Of all the temporary properties that the Society used, Simpson and William’s building was the most fitting for the exhibition and sale of art works. It was retained until 1888 with the CSA council establishing a good relationship with the owners. From 1886 the Society leased the building throughout the year for sixpence a week, exhibiting and selling art work by its members, and paying a 7½ % commission on sales to the proprietor. In addition, the Society moved its collection from the Museum to the High Street building in April 1886. This allowed the paintings to be displayed throughout the year. However, the move was only temporary. In September 1887 the collection was placed back in the Museum, with a request from president, Richmond Beetham, that students from the School of Art were provided exclusive access to the pictures on half a day per week. The CSA’s change of mind was no doubt due to the purchase of five paintings from the Royal Academy in 1886. Their acquisition must have raised the Society’s opinion of its collection and impressed upon it the need for greater care. While the CSA continued to use Simpson and William’s building for its annual exhibitions and the sale of paintings, the Museum remained the preferred gallery for its acquisitions, until extensions to the Armagh Street gallery in 1894 established a permanent room for their display.

Although pleased with its central city locality and its ample space and lighting, the CSA unfortunately lost the use of the building in 1889 when they were informed by Miss Simpson that ‘they would not be able to let the gallery to the society this year in consequence of the City Council having refused to license the room for public meetings.’ A recent earthquake drew the City Council’s attention to bylaws regarding public gatherings in buildings in the inner city and Simpson and Williams’s license was not renewed ‘for want of proper exit.’ Traditionally holding its annual exhibition in March each year, the CSA was informed of the decision in late January. The loss of the rooms created immediate difficulties. This would not be the only occasion in which the City Council’s policies on public gatherings would impede the

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11 CSA minutes, 16 March 1886.
12 CSA minutes, 1 April 1886.
13 CSA minutes, 14 September 1887.
14 Press, 17 March 1888, p. 4. ‘We are asked to make special mention (as it would seem that few of our readers are aware of the fact) that the pictures are at present hung in the gallery of the Canterbury Museum, and that the recent acquisitions by purchase of the Society will also shortly be added to their collection.’
15 CSA minutes, 28 January 1889.
16 Christchurch City Council minutes, 10 September and 24 September 1888.
CSA’s ability to further the arts. A sub-committee, consisting of Wynn-Williams, Mountfort, Gibb and Garsia, sought out any available rooms in Christchurch. They reported back on 1 February that the only suitable premises were at 146 Cashel Street. It was quickly resolved to engage the rooms (Ford’s building) for the forthcoming exhibition.\textsuperscript{17} The Society’s council worked to ensure that the annual exhibition remained, as far as possible, on schedule. In April the \textit{Lyttelton Times} reported that

\begin{quote}
The annual exhibition of the Canterbury Society of Arts will be held a little later than usual this year. It is to be opened on April 10\textsuperscript{th}, and some difficulty has been met with this year we understand, in finding a suitable locality. Captain Garsia, the energetic Secretary, has been unable to procure the room above Simpson and Williams’ shop, and the exhibition will be transferred to the big room above Mr. Walton’s late office, once used as an auction room, in Cashel street, near Tattersalls.\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

The large upper room in Ford’s Building on Cashel Street although ‘not entirely satisfactory as a gallery [was] still not without its merits.’\textsuperscript{19} The \textit{Lyttelton Times} noted, with evident satisfaction, that the reduced size of the premises meant that the number of works rejected by the hanging committee ‘were numerous this year.’\textsuperscript{20} However, the CSA council were less enthusiastic. No doubt frustrated by the City Council’s decision over the occupation of the Simpson and William’s building they wrote to central government to obtain land near the Provincial Council Chamber for the purpose of erecting an art gallery.\textsuperscript{21} Ford’s auction room was the fifth building to be utilised by the CSA within nine years. Accordingly, Beetham alluded to this when he opened the ninth annual exhibition:

\begin{quote}
Since I last had the honour of addressing you it has been found necessary to change the locality of our exhibition-room, entailing some expense and considerable trouble in arranging the numerous exhibits, however, our indefatigable Hon. Secretary, Captain Garsia, has brought us fairly through our difficulties, and I hope that before our next gathering the Society will have
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{17} CSA minutes, 1 February 1889. \\
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Lyttelton Times}, 2 April 1889, p. 6. \\
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Lyttelton Times}, 9 April 1889, p. 5. \\
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Ibid}. \\
\textsuperscript{21} CSA minutes, 2 April 1889.
\end{flushright}
acquired a habitation of its own, which will enable us to exhibit the works of its members in a creditable manner.\textsuperscript{22}

Following the exhibition, the CSA made a firm commitment to building a gallery. Beetham secured the site on the corner of Armagh and Durham streets with the assistance of land agent and politician, E. C. J. Stevens.\textsuperscript{23} The CSA was registered under the Companies' Act of 1882 to allow it to accept the grant of land,\textsuperscript{24} the appropriate articles of association were put in place,\textsuperscript{25} and Beetham requested that local architects submit suitable plans and costings for a gallery.\textsuperscript{26} The remaining obstacle that the CSA council faced was raising the funds to erect the building. The 1889 annual report noted that:

\begin{quote}
\textit{at no distant date the Society will be in a financial position to carry out the erection of a suitable building. It is roughly estimated that £3000 will be required for the purpose. At present the Society's credit balance amounts to £909, but a further sum of £200 will shortly be added, viz, about £150 from Members for Annual Subscriptions, and £45 for interest due on deposits.}\textsuperscript{27}
\end{quote}

Although plans were well advanced by May 1889, the Society's council was not entirely convinced that funds were available to proceed. Even as late as February 1890, Beetham and Gibb inspected alternative premises on Cashel Street for the next annual exhibition.\textsuperscript{28} The rooms were barely suitable, being

\begin{quote}
\textit{...small and ill-[suited]... and in the absence of better would doubtless answer our purpose. No gas was laid on and as it would mean a very heavy expense to do so the exhibition would have to be held during the day only and not in the evening.}\textsuperscript{29}
\end{quote}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{22} \textit{Lyttelton Times}, 11 April 1889, p. 5.
\bibitem{23} \textit{Lyttelton Times}, 5 November 1890, p. 6. Beetham acknowledged that 'mainly through [Stevens's] exertions, the Society...became the owner of the valuable section of land.'
\bibitem{24} CSA Minutes, 10 July 1889, Reports 1880-1919.
\bibitem{25} Barraud, letter to Wynn Williams, 22 May 1889, Reports 1880-1919, CSA Box 2, CSA Archive, CAG1.
\bibitem{26} CSA minutes, 10 May 1889.
\bibitem{27} \textit{Lyttelton Times}, 19 February 1890.
\bibitem{28} CSA minutes, 11 February 1890.
\bibitem{29} CSA minutes, 18 February 1890.
\end{thebibliography}
Facing the costs of fitting out additional temporary premises, the CSA delayed its annual exhibition and proceeded with plans to build its own gallery. A tender for £1229 was accepted, and the Armagh Street gallery was built within four months. The tenth annual exhibition was opened in the new building on 4 November 1890.

Beetham, Garsia, and Mountfort all played a critical role in its establishment. Beetham was president from 1884 to 1892, overseeing the relocation of exhibitions to three temporary venues before the Armagh Street premises were completed. His rallying call to build the gallery in 1889 is therefore hardly surprising. As architect, Mountfort’s role was also vital. He generously provided plans and supervised construction of the building free of charge. Although initially estimated to cost up to £3000, Mountfort’s final plans, tendered at £1229, reveal his skill and capacity to budget and realise a suitable solution. When the CSA first called for tenders its funds were £400 short of the lowest estimate. Mountfort responded by refusing to accept payment for his contribution, and at every opportunity reduced costs. In response to Beetham’s request that the gallery could be more economically constructed in brick, rather than stone, Mountfort prepared new plans and submitted a modified tender on two occasions. After having received six tenders of which the highest price was £1,784 he considerably reduced construction costs by specifying that brick be used.

Mountfort’s design for the CSA gallery was primarily utilitarian, with a simple rectangular hall and skylights, and exterior decorative brick banding and patterns. (Plate 10) Ian Lochhead maintains that the gallery’s plans may have initially been Gothic Revival in design, but the completed building ‘confounds every expectation, for it reveals no trace of any historical style.’ He suggests a precedent for the CSA gallery in the brick-patterned interior of Mountfort’s Church of the Good

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30 CSA minutes, 30 June 1890.
31 Lyttelton Times, 5 November 1890.
32 CSA minutes, 18 February 1890.
33 CSA minutes, 25 March 1890.
34 CSA minutes, 1 April 1890.
35 CSA minutes, 3 April, 8 April and 30 June 1890.
36 CSA minutes, 25 March 1890.
37 CSA minutes, 8 April 1890.
Plate No. 10. The CSA Armagh and Durham Street gallery c.1915, which opened in 1890 and 1894 respectively. Benjamin Mountfort designed the Armagh Street gallery and Collins and Harman, the extensions or Durham Street gallery.
Shepherd, Phillipstown, where decoration was similarly eliminated: 'It is as if the Phillipstown church has been turned inside-out to expose the brick outside.' The Lyttelton Times was suitably enthusiastic about the practicality of the new building, noting that it was 'admirably adapted for the purpose for which it was designed, the lighting arrangements are first class, and all the pictures are seen to advantage:'

a better lighted, more substantial and yet cosy gallery has never been enjoyed by New Zealand artists and their patrons.... As to the lighting, Mr Honorary Architect Mountfort and Honorary Secretary Captain Garsia have taken care of that. Every picture can be seen and seen well, without resorting to the cunning shifts and devices for getting "a good angle" which have had to be practised by visitors in days gone by, and the enthusiastic connoisseur need not scurry down to the gallery just after breakfast to secure the best light of the day for his favourite canvas.

The new gallery was thus a considerable improvement on the previous temporary premises, with far more space for visitors and ample seating. However, although praised by the Press and Lyttelton Times when it opened, the inadequacies of the gallery became rapidly apparent. As early as March 1891 the Society's council applied to the government for a further grant of land to build additional premises for exhibiting its permanent collection. Such a decision was anticipated from the outset. In part, the Armagh Street gallery was a response to the immediate considerations of where to hold the next annual exhibition. While it was suitable for such purposes, additional spaces were still required for the care and display of the larger works in the permanent collection, the watercolour collection, and a room for the custodian of the premises. Stevens again assisted in securing adjoining land for these extensions from central government. Collins and Harman were appointed architects and recommended that Bowen and Palmer's tender for £1,439.17.6 be accepted. Why did the Society not make further use of Mountfort who had generously provided his

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40 Lyttelton Times, 5 November 1890, p. 6.
41 Lyttelton Times, 11 November 1890, p. 5.
42 Lyttelton Times, 9 April 1891, p. 5.
43 CSA minutes, 17 March 1891.
44 Lyttelton Times, 30 March 1894, p. 5.
45 CSA minutes, 30 June 1892.
46 Press, 5 October 1892, p. 3.
47 CSA minutes, 18 September 1893.
services and advice previously? There is no mention of dissatisfaction with Mountfort’s plans for the Armagh Street gallery, but neither was the new building praised for its architecture.\(^{48}\) In fact, the Dunedin arts magazine, the *Triad*, was somewhat critical, claiming ‘the building is undoubtedly the ugliest in Christchurch.’\(^{49}\) Although he had remained faithful to Augustus Pugin’s principles of an honesty of design, the gallery’s minimal and practical means were ‘almost certainly lost on all but a few of his contemporaries.’\(^{50}\) As the gallery’s extensions were to encompass space for the permanent collection, the CSA must have wanted a more ornate design to reflect the status for which the new building was intended. Plans by Collins and Harman for a Venetian Gothic Revival facade fulfilled such expectations. When the Society’s 14\(^{th}\) annual exhibition opened in 1894 the extensions were completed. The *Lytelton Times* reported that the Society now had a new and more expansive building on Durham Street adjoining the Armagh Street gallery:

The main gallery has been lengthened by 20ft, making the total length 32ft by 42ft broad. A small room off the main hall, connected with the new gallery, will be used for water-colours in connection with the permanent collection. On the Durham Street frontage a handsome front, one storey high, has been built in brick and stone.... A spacious vestibule, with roomy ante-rooms on either side, admits to the new large gallery 52 ft long by 46ft broad. This is lighted by a raised skylight, running nearly the whole length of the gallery. The permanent collection belonging to the society will be housed here, and as soon as arrangements are complete it is intended to open the collection to the public on certain days of the week. The hall will be available for meetings, receptions and other public gatherings. The floor has been specially set on springs for dancing, and carefully laid.\(^{51}\)

A smoking room and kitchen were also included.\(^{52}\)

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\(^{48}\) *Lytelton Times*, 5 November 1890, p. 6. The newspaper describes it as a ‘most useful’ building.

\(^{49}\) *Triad*, 15 December 1894, p. 20.

\(^{50}\) Lochhead, p. 287.

\(^{51}\) *Lytelton Times*, 30 March 1894, p. 5.

The manner in which the gallery and its extensions were realised, however, was not entirely appreciated by the CSA's membership. At the annual general meeting in 1890 questions were raised about the perceived lack of consultation and haste with which the Articles of Association has been introduced. Artist and working member, Thornhill Cooper, claimed that the decision was made with haste, ignoring the wishes of the majority of the Society's membership. Mountfort responded in frustration that 'the Council had had a good deal of hard work and very little thanks.'

This rift between the CSA council and working artists over the extensions to the gallery became centred upon its secretary, Garsia, who was widely acknowledged as most responsible for establishing the new building. In 1902 the Press praised the CSA for paying off the debt incurred in building the Armagh and Durham Street gallery, with special tribute being paid to Garsia:

In congratulating the Society on its release from its troubles, it is impossible to pass over in silence the man to whom the present position is very largely due. As honorary secretary of the Society, Captain Garsia could not please everybody all the time, but everyone conversant with the Society’s affairs knows and appreciates the energy with which he did all he could for many years to forward its interests.

The CSA council felt equally appreciative of Garsia's efforts and commissioned a portrait of him by local artist, James Lawson Balfour, (Plate 11) for its permanent collection in 1902.

Garsia's fundraising activities for the gallery and its extensions included holding art unions and issuing debentures. Funds previously utilised for purchasing art works for the collection were now directed towards the building project. From 1890 to 1900 only four works were purchased by the CSA for its permanent collection. In comparison, the Society had acquired fifteen works in 1886 alone by local artists from

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53 Press, 19 February 1890, p. 6.
54 Press, 5 March 1902, p. 6.
55 CSA minutes, 14 April and 6 November 1902.
56 CSA minutes, 26 November 1890.
57 CSA minutes, 19 June 1893.
58 See Appendix 3.
Plate No. 11. J. L. Balfour, Portrait of Captain Garsia, 1902, Oil on Canvas, 680mm x 510mm. This portrait of the CSA secretary from 1884 to 1895 was commissioned by the Society.
both the annual exhibition and the Black and White exhibition. Working members increasingly expressed concern over the CSA’s support for the arts and Garsia attracted the majority of the criticism.

In fact, even prior to building the gallery, Garsia’s actions had upset artists whose work had been rejected from the annual exhibition held at Ford’s building in 1889. Limited space for exhibiting work that year meant that the hanging committee was rigorous in its selections. The *Lyttelton Times* observed that there were ‘fewer crudities and work that their authors should have had the good sense to keep for their own private admiration or that of the family circle.’ These comments were made following the reviewer’s ‘peep into a certain apartment to which Captain Garsia admits the privileged.’ Such actions were criticised in a letter to the newspaper by a correspondence identifying themselves as “Vox.”:

I have always understood that the Society was formed for promoting study in the fine arts and for periodical exhibitions of original works. It was certainly never intended to hold up the labour of love, and such commendable ambition, to cruel sarcasm and ridicule. Such treatment was never anticipated by the founders of the Society, and I cannot but conclude that the Hon. Secretary, not only acted injudiciously, but most unwisely.

Tensions between Garsia and the working members were to increase over the following six years, leading to his resignation in 1896.

This split between the CSA and its membership has been previously portrayed as a gulf between a conservative art society and a radical group of artists who established a breakaway faction known as the Palette Club. The number of art works rejected from the annual exhibition in 1889 has been described as instigating the division. The

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60 *Lyttelton Times*, 9 April 1889, p. 5.
63 CSA minutes, 29 January 1896.
Palette Club was a ‘kind of Société des Refusés,’ and sketch club which held regular meetings and exhibitions, challenging the CSA’s authority.\(^{65}\) It sought to ‘encourage serious work and study from nature, and to raise the standard of artistic excellence’.\(^{66}\) The publication that accompanied the centennial exhibition of the CSA at the Robert McDougall Art Gallery in 1980 stated:

> Although essentially a protest group challenging the Council... the Club also proved to be a welcome outlet for those artists who sought a more intimate “mutual help” approach... it provided an opportunity for many of the more avant garde artists to exhibit. Surprisingly enough, the more experimental and adventurous displays which resulted were viewed with enthusiasm by both the public and the art critics alike..... the emphasis the Club placed on the sketch was to have a profound influence on art in Canterbury generally...... [with] a new, bolder, broader treatment of paint and larger canvases.\(^{67}\)

It has been maintained that the CSA was forced to review its policies towards artists and introduce sketches into its annual exhibitions, while also increasing the number of artists on the Society’s council.\(^{68}\) However, the Palette Club’s contribution to the arts in Canterbury and its influence on the CSA’s policy, have both been overstated.

The Club was similar to other sketching societies formed by artists during this period including the Mahlstick Club in Auckland and the Bishopdale Club in Nelson,\(^{69}\) which also placed emphasis upon drawing directly from nature and offering members mutual criticism of each other’s work. In Christchurch the formation of the Palette Club coincided with planned extensions to the CSA gallery and this was of far greater importance to artist members of the Society than any ideology or artistic agenda. Although it has been claimed that this dissent was initiated due to the 1889 exhibition and the decision of a conservative and ‘largely amateur hanging committee’ to omit numerous art works,\(^{70}\) the large number of rejected paintings that year was due to the limited space available in the temporary premises. Moreover, the hanging committee

\(^{65}\) Roberts, p. 32.
\(^{66}\) Lyttelton Times, 29 August 1892, p. 5.
\(^{67}\) The Canterbury Society of Arts 1880 – 1890, p. 9.
\(^{68}\) Ibid.
\(^{69}\) Roberts, p. 32.
\(^{70}\) Ibid.
were far from amateur, consisting of A. Handel Gear, John Gibb and Mountfort.\textsuperscript{71} It would be difficult to have found a better qualified group of individuals to undertake the selection process. Gear had trained in England and been headmaster of Ryde School and Christ’s Hospital College prior to coming to Christchurch as the drawing master, art instructor and lecturer in art at Christchurch Girls’ High School. He ‘strongly advocated the proposition of a ‘modern’ school of art being established in New Zealand.’\textsuperscript{72} In addition, at the exhibition opening Beetham praised the work of ‘many of our younger artists… [who were] coming rapidly to the front with really good sound work,’ and noted the positive influence of the Canterbury College School of Art\textsuperscript{73}. While the Palette Club emphasised working directly from nature, Beetham criticised the rejected works in the 1889 show because they were primarily studio art works:

Most of the rejected pictures bore the unmistakeable stamp of purely studio work…. You cannot improve on Nature’s handiwork, and unless the artist, young or old, constantly works direct from Nature – and by working from Nature I mean painting in colour from nature in the open air - he, or she, will inevitably come to utter grief.\textsuperscript{74}

Beetham’s advice to those whose work was rejected was accompanied by a reassurance that all but one artist had at least one art work exhibited.\textsuperscript{75} Consequently, there is little to suggest that the 1889 exhibition acted as a catalyst for the establishment of a radical generation of artists to break away from a supposedly reactionary art society. Indeed, such claims about the CSA miss their target. The Armagh Street gallery and the Durham Street extensions reveal its progressive support for the arts, and its far-sighted commitment to making provision for future generations of artists in Canterbury.

However, a rift did later emerge. Demands tabled by working members in 1892 were driven by artists who were prominent in the Palette Club. Cooper, George Herbert

\textsuperscript{71} CSA minutes, 2 April 1889.
\textsuperscript{72} Roberts, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{73} \textit{Lyttelton Times}, 11 April 1889, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
Elliott, Robert Gill, and William Sprott protested against the cost of extending the gallery, and requested support for the purchase of their work. They demanded that

1. the council of the Canty [sic] Art Society be requested to postpone any further additions to the art gallery till the completion of the time allotted by Government being of opinion that the present gallery is large enough for all practical purposes.

2. That the council be asked to give annually to each member of the society an art union ticket or tickets of the value of ¼ of his or her subscription, such ticket or tickets to be available for the purchase of acquisition of each exhibition. That inasmuch as last year certain works by English artists were exhibited and sold by the society it be a recommendation to the council that no work of an artist residing abroad shall be exhibited for sale by the society except when such artists have formerly been resident in this colony and in membership with same... art society.⁷⁶

In summary, the artists were requesting greater support for the sale of their work from the Society. J. M. Madden (1856-1923) had written to the CSA in April 1892 appealing that works be acquired for the permanent collection from the annual exhibition. He was informed that the council ‘does not see its way to buy any of the works of art at this exhibition in anticipation of requiring all its available funds for building purposes.’⁷⁷ Such a response must have increased tensions with Garsia and the CSA council. Madden and other members of the Palette Club had already gifted art works to assist with fundraising for the Armagh Street portion of the gallery,⁷⁸ with Elliott, Rosa Budden, W. M. Gibb, Madden, Dora Meeson, and Beatrice Partridge listed as donors in the Society’s annual report in 1891.⁷⁹ Cooper maintained that the CSA did not support local artists and called for a halt to the gallery’s extensions, claiming that there had been no need for a building in the first instance:

He had listened to a number of excuses why the Council had fallen short of their duty. They had spent £1600 on a building for the annual exhibitions, and it was only a waste of money. Why they could not hang their permanent collection upon

⁷⁶ CSA minutes, 20 September 1892.
⁷⁷ CSA minutes, 6 April 1892.
⁷⁸ Lyttelton Times, 5 November 1890, p. 6. In all, 38 artists had provided art works to fundraise.
⁷⁹ Lyttelton Times, 14 January 1891, p. 6.
those walls he could not see.... The working members thought they were going to have some reward for their self-denial, but the Chairman had given them an alluring picture of what the Council were going to do. He spoke against the practice of erecting large buildings and considered the Society should not enter into competition with those who had rooms to let for public purposes.80

CSA council member, R. D. Thomas, responded to Cooper, reproving working artists for not supporting the extensions, as this diminished their opportunities to make use of the building:

The section of land at the back was granted on condition that buildings were erected in five years' time, and if those buildings were carried out, they could have night classes, and any surplus income could be devoted to the purchase of works of art. He considered that artists were making a mistake in not supporting the completion of the building.81

The CSA council won the argument to proceed with the extensions and concluded with a motion that

the Canterbury Society of Arts should as soon as possible carry out its resolution to build a caretaker’s cottage and free public gallery for the purpose of providing accommodation for the pictures belonging to the Society, using for this purpose the funds at its disposal and any other funds from time to time available.82

However, for a number of artists attending the meeting, this decision only confirmed that the Society was not interested in supporting its working members. It was also noted that this rift had been growing for some time. G. W. Russell observed:

At the present time the Society was in an unhealthy state as a number of the working members were at variance with a portion of the Council, and the Society should endeavour to heal the breach.83

80 Press, 5 October 1892, p. 3.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
Artists began to withdraw their support and at the annual general meeting in 1894, Stevens noted the reduced number of members and the significant fall in revenue compared with previous years.\(^8^4\)

This split reached a crisis point in 1895 with the *Press* describing the Society’s annual exhibition that year as the poorest it had held.\(^8^5\) However, it must also be noted that over the previous six years the CSA had supported the Palette Club. Far from being slighted by the selections of the Hanging Committee at the CSA’s exhibition in 1889, Madden had been singled out for attention in the *Press* as ‘much the progressive artist,’\(^8^6\) and the Society had purchased his painting, *In the Grey of the Morning* for its collection.\(^8^7\) Moreover, a history of the first three years of the Palette Club in the *Lyttelton Times* noted that since its establishment, it had made extensive use of the CSA gallery for weekly life classes and quarterly exhibitions. Members of the Palette Club also served on the CSA council, including Madden, Meeson, Sprott and Margaret Stoddart,\(^8^8\) and W. M. Gibb and Sprott, alongside John Gibb, made up the CSA hanging committee in 1893.\(^8^9\) This counters suggestions that the Society wished to exclude the work of younger artists from annual exhibitions. The notion that the CSA significantly lacked a suitable number of artists on its council is also problematic.\(^9^0\) In 1895 when the Palette Club held its largest and most successful exhibition, the CSA council was well-represented by prominent professional artists, including Stoddart, van der Velden, and A. W. Walsh.\(^9^1\) In addition, while reviews of the Palette Club’s 1892 exhibition praised the artists’ work for their broader treatment of form, such realist and impressionistic influences were already evident in art societies elsewhere. The work of Stoddart, van der Velden and Walsh was characterised by its plein-air’ treatment of the landscape, and van der Velden was acknowledged as the leading artist in Canterbury. In the Black and White exhibition in 1891 the North and West walls of the gallery were hung with sketches and studies

\(^{84}\) *Canterbury Times*, 8 March 1894, p. 37. There were 86 working members, compared with 94 in 1892 and the income from the 1893 annual exhibition was £190, in comparison with £493 in 1891 and £360 in 1892.

\(^{85}\) *Press*, 26 April 1895, p. 4.

\(^{86}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{87}\) CSA minutes, 10 April 1889.

\(^{88}\) CSA minutes, 6 April 1892, 2 February 1893, 23 February 1893.

\(^{89}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{90}\) Roberts, p. 34.

\(^{91}\) CSA minutes, 11 February 1895.
by the artist. At the Society’s annual general meeting in 1892, Stevens singled out van der Velden, thanking him on behalf of the CSA council for ‘the loan of so large a number of charming works.’ With the precedent of van der Velden’s romantic realism evident in the Society’s gallery it is therefore, hardly surprising, that the Lyttelton Times’ review of the Palette Club’s 1892 exhibition praised the broad treatment of form in many of the works exhibited. The Club consolidated, rather than extended or challenged current arts practice:

The works exhibited on Saturday night showed, to a very creditable extent, fidelity to nature, freedom of style, and vigorous treatment. Moreover, they for the most part indicated that breadth of effect is now more regarded than minute attention to comparatively unimportant details.

This division of opinion between the Society’s council and the Palette Club became exacerbated by a clash between Madden and the individual perceived to be responsible for securing the funds for the CSA’s gallery, Captain Garsia. In 1895 this discord became public. Garsia and his wife, Elizabeth Watson, had arrived in Christchurch in 1882, after inheriting a considerable income from her father and following Garsia’s retirement from a successful military career with the British army in India. His prominent social status and military background distanced him from many of the local artists and Garsia appears to have been indifferent to such criticisms. Praised by the Society’s council for his hard work on behalf of the CSA, in 1899 he somewhat irreverently listed his occupation in the Christchurch electoral roll as ‘loafer.’ Certainly, his attitude angered a number of members of the Palette Club. At the opening of its third annual exhibition Madden emphasised the way in which the Club sought to benefit artists and outlined its philosophical differences with the CSA, implicitly criticising Garsia and suggesting that social status did not make anyone an authority on the arts:

Each year the whole of the [CSA’s] income, after paying expenses and deducting the amounts for scholarships and competitions, was expended in the art union,

92 Press, 15 January 1892, p. 3.
93 Lyttelton Times, 29 August 1892, p. 5.
94 Christina Penber to Warren Feeney, Email, 19 March 2007.
95 Christchurch Electoral Roll 1899, p. 137.
whereby both public and artist benefited. Was it reasonable to suppose that professional artists who had given their lives to the work, and who had any respect for themselves and the profession they followed, would submit to have their business managed and be dictated to by a body of men who, however high they might be in the social scale, or clever in their own line of life, had no professional qualifications for the successful carrying on of the work that they were attempting to perform? All the artists wished, or ever had wished, was the management by independent artists of the art part of that Society, the use of the buildings that they had aided to put up for their exhibitions and meetings and a fair proportion of the proceeds to carry on the work that they were now doing, and doing well, unaided and alone.96

Madden’s criticisms were well received by local artists. The CSA’s annual exhibition in 1895 had been poorly supported by its working members.97 The Press lamented the quality of work displayed:

Even the most ardent parochial patriot would find it difficult to wax proud over the present exhibition of the Canterbury Society of Arts. And this, the fifteenth annual exhibition of the Society – marks a distinct retrogression. From whatever cause this exhibition is inferior, in the quality of the best pictures, in the number of exhibits, and in the variety and interest of the subjects treated.98

In contrast, the Palette Club’s exhibition in October that year was described as ‘one of the best we have had here.’99

The Press had alluded to the clash between Madden and Garsia, and that the cause of the problem rested in the ‘unhappy incompatibility of temper between the Council of the Art Society and a number of our best local painters.’100 It maintained that the problem was driven by a clash of personalities and that more important issues were being ignored: ‘What the merits of the question in dispute are we neither know nor care; the whole matter is too trivial to interest the general reader seriously.’101

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96 Press, 8 October 1895, p. 6.
97 Canterbury Times 18 April 1895, p. 33.
98 Press, 26 April 1895, p. 4.
99 Press, 8 October 1895, p. 6.
100 Press, 26 April 1895, p. 4.
101 Ibid.
A letter to the *Press* from ‘Working Member,’ claimed that the entire problem rested with Garsia:

It is the Secretary of the Society that is, and has been for years past, the sole cause of the trouble. The slightest enquiry will confirm the fact, and it appears to me that had this gentleman had the interest of the Society at heart he must have resigned long ago.... I venture to say that I am speaking the mind of the whole art fraternity when I say that the trouble would disappear on the resignation of the Secretary, and the appointment of a more popular person in his stead. Herein lies the sole trouble which prompted the conception of the Palette Club and its ultimate success.102

While the CSA council maintained a broad vision in developing the arts, local artists were more immediately and practically concerned with the sale of their work. Both were of importance to the Society, but the division over long and short term priorities for nurturing the fine arts was exacerbated by the animosity held towards Garsia. He was sensitive to such attacks, offering his resignation as secretary-treasurer in 1892, 1893, and 1896.103 On each occasion he emphasised that his unpopularity was the primary reason:

Garsia again expressed a desire to be relieved of the post and hoped that someone else would be nominated instead. He had been accused of all sorts of acts in a variety of ways which seemed that his services were not appreciated by certain working members. He would prefer not to be secretary again.104

However, the council valued Garsia’s hard work and contribution to the new gallery and its extensions, and turned down his requests until 1896. His resignation was finally accepted with ‘extreme regret’ and the council placed on record ‘its highest appreciation of thanks for the valuable services of Captain Garsia to the society.’105

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102 *Press*, 27 April 1895, p. 8.
103 CSA minutes, 2 February 1892, 23 February 1893 and 29 January 1896.
104 CSA minutes, 23 February 1893.
105 CSA minutes, 29 January 1896.
Following Garsia’s resignation ‘two prominent members of the Palette Club, Messrs J. M. Madden and [William] Menzies Gibb, were elected members of the [CSA] Council,’106 and the number of working members increased. However, to maintain that the Palette Club had brought about policy change and better representation of artists by the Society is questionable. With the gallery extensions completed and the debt paid off by 1902, the CSA could increasingly focus on the development of its permanent collection and the acquisition of paintings by Canterbury artists. In 1904 the Society purchased seven works and from 1912 onwards the City Council grant ensured that art works by local artists were purchased each year. Rather than representing the voice of a radical and younger generation, the Palette Club really embodied the opinion of working artists frustrated by the Society’s inability to purchase paintings or hold art unions in support of the sale of artists’ and their associates’ works. Such an agenda was far from ideological; it was self-serving. Although Madden maintained that the Palette Club provided a level of support for artists in 1895 that the CSA had neglected, the Society’s vision for an art gallery and its extensions in 1894 would be of far greater consequence to Canterbury artists for the next seventy years.

Following the opening of its gallery, the CSA now required the necessary income to maintain the building and its services. After the remaining works from the collection were removed from the Museum and placed in the gallery by the end of 1894,107 (Plate 12), the decision was made to lease the building for public and private functions. The CSA council had differing opinions about the merits of this resolution. The Society sought to display the collection free of charge while ensuring its care and safety, yet to do so it was required to lease the gallery, exposing art works to potential damage. Madden voiced his objections in 1892 during the debate about the proposed gallery extensions. His opinion was shared by a number of council members, even those who admitted the necessity of leasing the premises. Thomas commented that:

> if it was the wish of the Council that the Gallery should not be used for other purposes, another source of income would be lost. If they wished to use their

106 Triad, 1 April 1896, p. 7.
107 CSA minutes, 24 October 1894.
Plate No. 12. The CSA’s permanent collection displayed in the Durham Street Gallery 1910. Adrian Stokes’ *Among the Sandhills*, c. 1885, is on the middle left wall and George Leslie’s *The Wizard’s Garden* is evident to the immediate right of the centre of the gallery.
collection of pictures to have night classes, and a caretaker for the Gallery, they could not afford to reduce their income.\textsuperscript{108}

When the gallery extensions were completed the Society seemed outwardly enthusiastic about the benefits of leasing for the betterment of the arts. The gallery was available:

for meetings, receptions and other public gatherings. The floor has been specially set on springs for dancing, and carefully laid. The revenue derived from the lettings of the gallery is to be set aside to form a fund for the purchase of good works, of an educational nature by European artists. By this means, without calling upon the public for subscriptions, a very valuable collection will be gradually amassed.\textsuperscript{109}

It is difficult to believe that the CSA ever felt entirely comfortable with this policy, but in the absence of suitable support from the City Council or central government, it remained necessary. In 1896 Hurst Seager commented:

It is... our hope that in a few years we will be in a position to keep the Gallery for pictures and other works of art only, and not let it for occasional outside entertainments, as at present.\textsuperscript{110}

Hire rates for the building included the lease of the entire gallery for one day at £3, the use of the large hall and tea room only at £2 and the watercolour room and two dressing rooms at £2.\textsuperscript{111} Due to the extensive and regular community use of the gallery, the income received was significant and often made the difference between profit and loss each financial year. In 1920 the revenue was higher than any previous year with more than £580 secured,\textsuperscript{112} virtually equal to income from membership subscription.\textsuperscript{113} However, the gallery’s rooms were placed under considerable pressure. Between 1894 and 1931 the building was let to various users including the Horticultural Society, the Chrysanthemum Society, the Canterbury Jockey Club,

\textsuperscript{108} Press, 5 October 1892, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{109} Lyttelton Times, 30 March 1894, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{110} CSA minutes, interview with Hurst Seager in an undocumented newspaper article, 8 July 1896.
\textsuperscript{111} CSA minutes, 18 May 1894.
\textsuperscript{112} CSA minutes, 19 October 1920.
\textsuperscript{113} Press, 19 November 1924, p. 5. For example, in 1924 the annual report of the CSA reported that £501.19s was received in membership and £493 9s in rent.
euchre clubs, the fire brigade, and even to a dog and cat show. Institutions using the gallery tended to ignore, or be ignorant of, the original purpose for which the building was intended. In 1895 the Musical Union requested the premises each Monday and Tuesday evening for 12 months, with additional demands to store music, a piano, music stands and instruments in the building for the sum of £42 per annum inclusive of gas, lighting and an attendant to lock up, following their meeting. The request was declined. Leasing meant greater vigilance with the duties of the secretary including overseeing a caretaker

whose duty is to keep the gallery clean, to remain in charge during stated hours of opening, and to book engagements for letting. The secretary will be required to visit the gallery every day at a time convenient to himself, to satisfy himself that everything is in order. To note what engagements have been made, to meet any intending tenants…. The secretary must receive and record the gas reading after each engagement, issue accounts for letting and gas, and collect pay into the bank and forward deposits [received] to the Hon Treasurer.

Inevitably, art works in the permanent collection were put at risk. The Horticultural Society was refused use of the gallery in 1908 with concern expressed by the secretary, Mr Alfred Evans, that:

The question of debris left after shows was the main trouble…. The debris very largely consisted of long strips of paper such as is used for newspapers and generally left in a big heap in the permanent gallery. If a match accidentally fired the heap the results might be of a very serious nature.

Concerns became more prevalent following the purchase of works by Royal Academy artists from the International Exhibition, and ‘in the opinion of the Council the collection of pictures… [was] now of such value that it [was] unadvisable to let the building for the purpose of Horticultural shows.’

114 CSA minutes, 25 August 1903, 6 March 1905, 6 July 1909, 2 November 1909, 19 June 1917, 2 February 1925 and 26 August 1926.
115 CSA minutes, 11 February 1895.
116 CSA minutes, notes at the beginning of the minute book from 8 July 1896.
117 CSA minutes, 29 January 1908.
118 CSA minutes, 29 January 1908.
Regular dances created the most apprehension. Throughout the 1920s jazz dances took place, attended by an average of more than 400 people, filling the gallery, and threatening the safety of the permanent collection. At the annual general meeting in 1921 the president, James Jamieson, together with McGregor Wright, outlined the problem:

A few days ago, while a function was on in the gallery, he saw, to his horror, palms placed inside the railing, and he had threatened to bundle them out. He sincerely wished that he could do without the revenue from lettings.... No one liked to take visitors to the present gallery – the place was sometimes in such a turmoil. Since dancing had been allowed in the permanent gallery he had noticed lemonade and ginger-beer over some of the pictures.

The following year Lester also expressed his frustration that

It went much against his grain, and that of the members of the council of the Society, that it was necessary to let the rooms for the abomination known as jazz dances. (Laughter).... He did think it rather a shame that their permanent art gallery should have to scrape along by getting fees from dances and from all sorts and conditions of people.

In 1923 president E. C. Huie also drew attention to the dangers of hiring the gallery to the general public: ‘the use of the gallery as a dance hall is fraught with risks to the pictures which should not be incurred any longer: than is necessary.’ In 1926, a work from the collection, appropriately titled, For Pity’s Sake by F. D. Bates, was damaged ‘by people running a dance. The picture was not hung but leant against the wall in the lobby,’ and subsequently repaired with the associated costs paid by the lessees. Such problems remained ongoing. In 1928 a letter to the Press commented:

119 Truth, 6 October, 1927, p. 5
120 Press, 14 December 1921, p. 2.
121 Press, 24 March 1922, p. 9.
122 Press, 16 March 1923, p. 9.
123 CSA minutes, 24 August 1926.
Rapid deterioration of the pictures in our Art Gallery is undoubtedly taking place, owing to the vibrations of the canvas during dancing. This applies only to oil paintings which are painted after a heavy priming coat is daubed on the surface of the canvas.... Again, as one who frequently visits the gallery, I feel that the care necessary to preserve valuable works of art is not being taken at the present time.... I would suggest storing our best pictures until we get a better gallery. As it is we mock them with red, white, and blue streamers to get the jazz effect. A visit to the gallery after a dance night is just a little humorous, just a little sad.¹²⁴

The previous year, Lester had drawn attention to the pressure that the Society faced as it sought to support and develop the arts in Canterbury, noting the limited assistance provided by the City Council.: ¹²⁵

The whole support of the gallery has been received from letting the hall, and from the subscriptions of a small group of subscribers. There is no other source of revenue, except the commission obtained on the sale of pictures at exhibition times. For some years the only support the City Council has given has been some £50 a year for the specific purpose of buying a picture. During the last 20 years the Society has, with this small revenue, bought up outstanding debentures to the value of £1150, carried out alterations amounting to £1500, and reduced the outstanding debt to £250, which we hope to clear off this year. My own opinion is that the present Gallery is totally unfitted for housing a permanent collection. The letting of the hall is very much against the policy of the Arts Society Council, but has been forced on us, because we must have some income.¹²⁵

Ironically, Lester’s concerns were partly resolved by the City Council. In August 1927 the Society received a letter informing it of complaints from residents in the gallery’s vicinity, objecting to the noise and disturbance caused by dances. Although the CSA replied that the grievances were the voice of a single neighbour ‘who was causing all the trouble,’¹²⁶ the City Council responded with notification that the ‘licence for the art gallery as a public building was cancelled.’¹²⁷ The Society’s

¹²⁶ CSA minutes, 27 August 1927.
¹²⁷ CSA minutes, 27 September 1927.
council challenged the ruling and threatened to take legal proceedings against the City Council:

General opinion was that a gross injustice has been done to the society by the city council and the question of applying to the supreme court by way of an appeal against the decision was discussed. Agreed that an application be made for a provisional license for flower shows, bazaars, etc to allow the society to complete its contracts.\textsuperscript{128}

However, the City Council remained steadfast, maintaining that the dances had created considerable problems for the general public in the vicinity:

For some time past the committee had been receiving serious complaints as to the conduct of persons who attend certain dances held at the Art Gallery. From inspections made, it is felt that the complaints are justified. Residents in the neighbourhood had complained that the trouble had been going on for two or three years. The committee were quite satisfied that improper conduct had taken place outside the building, and for this reason had decided not to renew the license of the Art Gallery.\textsuperscript{129}

A letter to the \textit{Press} sought to confirm in further detail the disruption that dances caused:

I know only too well the bare facts – empty bottles, etc, thrown into one’s garden speak for themselves in a modest way, but it is no doubt the same old story, the many have to suffer for the few. the few bounders and upstarts create the trouble and drag down the majority.\textsuperscript{130}

The national newspaper, \textit{Truth}, came to the CSA’s defence and argued that the Society was being unfairly targeted by the Mayor, the Reverend J. K. Archer, whose criticisms were informed by an unreasonable religious and moral zeal. The newspaper maintained that: ‘After full investigation “N.Z. Truth” is convinced that the action of the council in cancelling the society’s license is unwarranted, arbitrary

\textsuperscript{128} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{129} \textit{Press}, 27 September 1927, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{130} \textit{Press}, 29 September 1927, p. 11.
and grossly unjust.  

Certainly, Archer revealed a degree of intolerance in his response to the CSA council’s threat of litigation. *Truth* reported his reply:

“I, for one, am not going to be browbeaten into climbing down by threats of legal proceedings,” he added, leaving no room for doubt that anyone daring to challenge his ideas would be met with the gloves off without any quarter being extended…. The threat of legal proceedings was as a red rag to a bull for the mayor, who, on his own utterances and demeanor [sic] in the matter, appears to take up the stand that it is an insult to the Labor [sic] mayor and council if anybody dares invoke their legal rights to prevent a gross injustice - which the cancellation of the license undoubtedly is. If the council considers the Art Gallery dances so improper… then to be consistent it must cancel the license of every dance-hall in the city.  

In fact, the City Council had already dealt with numerous complaints regarding behaviour at dances, particularly outside halls at the end of the evening. The termination of the Society’s license was certainly informed by the moral crusade undertaken by Archer to address the behaviour of its younger citizens. The safety of young women and the provision of alcohol, as well as general disturbances, had led to a number of cancellations of licenses. In 1929 the City Council sought to curtail the closing time of dances to 11.30pm and appointed a woman inspector to visit inner-city dances. It was maintained that at the CSA gallery one of the real dangers was that of ‘men taking flasks along and inducing their dancing partners to share the drink with them during the intervals.’ Archer maintained that ‘There is a very small sector of men and women who seem to be unable to go to dances without behaving like pigs.’ However, while regretting the necessity for holding dances, the CSA was indignant at the City Council’s position and no doubt, its implicit failure to provide a solution or compensate for the loss of vital revenue.

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131 *Truth*, 6 October, 1927, p. 5.
133 Christchurch City Council minutes, 30 September 1929.
134 Christchurch City Council minutes, 4 November 1929.
Plate No. 13. When Christchurch Mayor, Rev. J. K. Archer, cancelled the CSA’s licence to hold dances and functions in the Durham and Armagh Street gallery in 1927, Truth supported the Society’s demands for its re-instatement.
Plate No. 13. When Christchurch Mayor, Rev. J. K. Archer, cancelled the CSA’s licence to hold dances and functions in the Durham and Armagh Street gallery in 1927, Truth supported the Society’s demands for its re-instatement.
This dispute focussed the CSA’s attention on the wider lack of support for the arts by the Mayor and councillors. It was now facing financial difficulty and needed to establish alternative means of income. Vice-president N. L. Macbeth addressed the City Council, emphasising the Society’s dilemma: ‘From 1920 to 1926 the sum of £3795 was collected in rents of which 76 percent was in respect of dances and £3455 was collected in subscriptions.’ Wright called for a membership rally in which the lost income could be met by increasing membership to 1000. Possibly the most dire indication of the CSA’s situation was evident in 1929 when the Society’s secretary, George Lester Donaldson, was called to answer questions about a rumoured pet show that was to take place in the Durham Street gallery. Wishing to maintain adequate income, the secretary had leased the building to the Top Dog and Cat Club. Lester objected and requested that Donaldson ‘cancel the letting as it was considered unsuitable to have a show of that nature in an art gallery.’ Donaldson apologised and expressed his regret at ‘doing anything that did not meet with the approval of the council,’ but was unable to cancel at short notice and the show went ahead. The presence of the CSA’s Royal Academy paintings surrounded by dogs and cats highlights the inadequacies of the Society’s revenue sources and the frustration it faced in the absence of suitable support or a public gallery to care for its permanent collection.

It was not just the leasing of the CSA gallery that threatened the safety of art works. The building itself proved inadequate. In 1912 an English art conservator, F. W. Colley, examined the CSA’s collection:

> It is only too apparent that the restorer’s attention is needed very badly indeed by many of our pictures. The reason, according to Mr Colley, is not far to seek. The Art Gallery is ill-ventilated, and, in fact, not altogether suitable for its purpose. All day it has the sun’s heat glaring upon the pictures, until the surfaces of some of them are hot to the touch; there is no provision at all for warming it in the winter, or at night. The unfitness of the Gallery has been recognised by the Council of the Society for some time past, the secretary says, and various plans

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137 Ibid.
139 CSA minutes, 23 April 1929.
140 Ibid.
141 CSA minutes, 9 July 1929.
for its improvement have been discussed. So far, however, nothing has been
decided upon, and it is said to be unlikely that anything will be done at the
moment. The Society has no funds to carry out the necessary work, so the hope
lies either in some liberal benefaction, or in a very great increase in the amount of
public subscriptions.\footnote{Press, 13 February 1912, p. 8.}

This was reiterated at the opening of the 32\textsuperscript{nd} Annual Exhibition by CSA president
William Reece who called for action:

The Canterbury Society of Arts, before very long, would have to face the
question of great alterations to the gallery. They had a fine collection of
paintings, and they required to take care of them. The present gallery was not
designed for the lengthy preservation of the present collection, and the Society
hoped to make better provision for the collection if the membership of the
Society was increased.\footnote{Press, 15 March 1912, p. 7.}

A review of the permanent collection that same year made similar observations:

The layman who possesses only a rudimentary appreciation of the aesthetic
cannot avoid feeling how inadequately the many excellent pictures are
displayed, and can only enter very fully into the Society’s desire to house the
pictures in a gallery that will do credit to the city.\footnote{Press, 21 September 1912, p. 14.}

In 1913 Hurst Seager requested that a meeting be held for the purpose of discussing
‘what steps should be taken to make a more worthy gallery for the exhibition of our
pictures.’\footnote{CSA minutes, 1 April 1913.} Unfortunately, his comments drew little response, although they were
repeated at the opening of the 40\textsuperscript{th} annual exhibition in 1920 by Macbeth whose
criticisms encompassed his response to the opening of the Sargeant Gallery in
Wanganui in September 1919:

Some steps must be taken to find a remedy in order that Christchurch should
maintain the position it held in art in New Zealand. Wanganui held an important
position simply because, by a resident's generosity, it had a gallery that would be a credit to a city much larger than Christchurch. There was no reason why Christchurch should not be as well off in that respect as Wanganui.  

Such provincial rivalry continued to fuel the CSA's demands in Christchurch and the question of new premises led Huie in 1923 to call for action:

The most important matter I wish to refer to tonight concerns the future of our gallery.... Your Council have decided that we have reached a stage in the history of the Society when a definite step should be taken. We should make a serious attempt to provide Christchurch with a public gallery more worthy of our rapidly-growing and very beautiful city. The limitations of this building are rather painfully obvious. The position is unsuitable, the atmospheric conditions are bad, and the use of the gallery as a dance hall is fraught with risks to the pictures which should not be incurred any longer than is necessary. After carefully considering the matter... the Council had decided to approach the Domains Board with a suggestion that they should consent to the erection of a public art gallery on a very suitable site on the West side of the Canterbury Museum..... He had no idea when the Society would be in a position to commence the new gallery.... In conclusion, Mr. Huie mentioned that the committee intended to have more social functions, and, perhaps, at the end of the exhibition an artists' ball would be held.  

Huie outlined the CSA's plans to secure the land and rallied the membership to support the project. In August, a sub-committee consisting of Huie, Cyrus J. R. Williams and Macbeth made a presentation to the Christchurch Domains Board and obtained a site behind the Museum. Although supporting progress on this front, the Society also remained adamant that the CSA gallery would be retained for an entirely separate function. At a Society council meeting in March 1923 it was made clear that the Armagh and Durham Street gallery would be retained for exhibitions and the generation of income, acting in a distinct capacity to the proposed gallery:

Huie... thought the time was at hand where Council should decide whether they would alter the present gallery or build a new one.... He suggested endeavouring

146 Press, 12 March 1920, p. 5.
147 Press, 16 March 1923, p. 9.
148 Press, 4 August 1923, p. 11.
to secure the site in the Domain and build a new gallery, keeping the present
gallery for exhibitions and revenue producing purposes.149

The retention of the CSA gallery and its distinct use as an exhibition space for
working artists was reiterated on a number of occasions.150

In spite of Huie’s success in obtaining the site for the gallery in 1923, little progress
was made until February 1925, when Jamieson, who had been an early advocate of
support from the City Council for the CSA, formulated a plan to place public pressure
upon the Mayor and councillors. Jamieson offered to leave a substantial bequest to
the Society of his ‘pictures, oils and watercolours... mezzotints, pieces of antique
furniture, chinaware and articles of virtue.’ His collection was to be gifted, provided
that they were housed, ‘in a suitable building to be erected in the Christchurch public
gardens within a reasonable time, say three or four years after the bequest came into
force.’151

Jamieson’s proposal reflected his long-standing commitment to the CSA and the arts
in Christchurch. He had already donated works to the Society in 1902 and had
maintained an interest in the preservation of the CSA’s gallery, frequently serving on
sub-committees formed to address repairs to the building.152 Following his election as
president in 1909, Jamieson emphasised the responsibilities of the City Council
towards the fine arts. He stated that:

the day had arrived when the City Council should subsidise say, by £ for £, any
expenditure made by the Society out of its ordinary revenue or any special moneys
raised for the purpose of purchasing pictures for the permanent collection.153

Jamieson’s offer to donate a substantial portion of his art collection under certain
conditions attracted an immediate public response. The Press maintained that

149 CSA minutes, 6 March 1923.
150 CSA minutes, 21 June 1927. Wallwork asked if the Society supported a new gallery
being sited at Armagh and Durham Street, and the present building being demolished. This was
rejected as it would limit the CSA’s activities as they ‘would have no place for exhibitions.’
151 CSA minutes, 2 February 1925.
152 CSA minutes, 15 April 1913 and 15 July 1913.
something definite will be done now to provide a permanent Art Gallery.' The CSA matched Jamieson’s offer later that year, offering to also hand over its permanent collection under similar conditions:

The Canterbury Society of Arts, in pursuance of the powers contained in this memorandum of association, hereby resolves to hand over and dispose of the works of art now belonging to the society, and known as the permanent collection, to the Mayor, councillors, and citizens of the city of Christchurch, when the said Mayor, councillors and citizens shall have provided a suitable Art Gallery or building for housing, collecting, and exhibiting the said works of art, and that the council of this society is hereby authorised and empowered to give effect to this resolution.

Following Jamieson’s death in 1927 the Society repeated its proposal, establishing a sub-committee of Lester, Richard Wallwork, Macbeth and Wright who met the Mayor and councillors, J. W. Beanland and D. Sullivan, to plan the building of the new gallery. The CSA took obvious advantage of Jamieson’s offer to focus the City Council and the public’s attention on the need for the gallery. It had been suggested to Jamieson that only a small number of works in his collection might be suitable and he was unhappy about such a proposition. In the event when the McDougall Gallery opened, only 24 of his 129 art works and artefacts were placed in the new building. The selection was made by CSA council members, Lester, Wallwork and Nicoll, who were familiar with the work prior to Jamieson’s death.

Through the advice and guidance that the CSA provided to the City Council, the Society ultimately achieved its objective of locating the best works from its permanent collection into a new art gallery. A photograph in the Christchurch Times of February 1932 perfectly encapsulates its role. Titled ‘Discussing the control of the New Art Gallery’ it features council members Lester, Heathcote Helmore, Huie, Nicoll, Wallwork and Wright alongside the Town Clerk J. S. Neville, and the Mayor,

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155 Press, 14 October 1925, p. 9.
156 CSA minutes, 24 May 1927.
159 Press 28 June 1932, p. 13 and Christchurch City Council minutes, 16 May 1932.
160 Christchurch City Council minutes, 16 May 1932.
F. G. Sullivan.\textsuperscript{161} When the building was opened later that year, further acknowledgement was made of the critical role played by the CSA:

Thanks to the efforts of the Canterbury Society of Arts, and private individuals, there is a collection of artistic gems in Christchurch of which any city or province might well be proud: and while the old art gallery has a long and useful period of service behind it, there is no doubt that the paintings and sculptures deserve a better setting and display that the old structure can give.\textsuperscript{162}

The CSA, Jamieson, the Mayor and City Council, were all indebted to Robert McDougall, who ultimately resolved debate over the gallery’s funding through his donation of £25,000. As the proprietor of Aulesbrook and Co, biscuit and confectionary manufacturer, McDougall was a retiring but highly successful local businessman and ‘one of the largest employers of labour in Christchurch.’\textsuperscript{163} He had expressed interest in a new gallery for the city in 1927, leading a public subscription for a suitable building. By March 1928, fundraising had stalled,\textsuperscript{164} and when the Mayor again requested his assistance, he donated the full amount required for construction,\textsuperscript{165} fulfilling the CSA’s long-standing ambitions to care for and display its permanent collection adequately.

Canterbury has often been described as the most advanced centre for the fine arts and painting in New Zealand during the 1920s and 1930s,\textsuperscript{166} but the CSA has rarely been credited for its contribution towards this status.\textsuperscript{167} Yet the Society was undoubtedly central to the province’s reputation. Its contribution is evident in the associated responsibilities that it had assumed by 1932. For fifty years previous to the opening of the McDougall Gallery it had worked to develop a significant collection of art work suitable for such a public gallery. Its duties now included the curation and care of these works, in conjunction with the City Council in a new gallery, and corresponding

\textsuperscript{161}Christchurch Times, 10 February 1932, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{162}Christchurch Times, 16 June, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{163}Press, 16 June 1932, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{164}Roberts, p. 50.
\textsuperscript{165}Christchurch Times, 16 June 1932, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{166}Roberts, pp. 38-39 and Brown and Keith, p. 105.
\textsuperscript{167}Roberts, p. 39 Roberts notes the contribution made by the establishment of a new public gallery, a strong Art School and vital arts community, but describes the CSA during this period as typified by a ‘collective conservatism.’
duties for the administration and maintenance of its exhibition programme and complementary building on Armagh and Durham streets. Although accounts up to 1932 frequently characterise the CSA as an essentially conservative arts institution, this is inaccurate.\textsuperscript{168} The Society’s success in funding and building its own permanent gallery within the first ten years of its establishment, maintaining the gallery and its annual exhibitions without significant support from the City Council, while also developing a public collection and placing increasing pressure on local government for a stand-alone public gallery, reveals a visionary arts institution determined to promote the arts in Canterbury.

Chapter Four: ‘We Must Progress – In These Days Nothing Can Stand Still.’

The CSA. 1932 – 1945.

After the Robert McDougall Art Gallery opened on 16 June 1932 and the Canterbury Society of Arts had presented a substantial part of its permanent collection to the public gallery, the Society’s pleasure in the presence of the new gallery was momentary. Until the mid-1940s the CSA’s activities were challenged firstly by economic depression and then by the Second World War. Both limited its ability to support the arts, particularly the purchase of new works for its permanent collection. In addition, the Society was also confronted by the establishment of new art groups and organisations that provided fresh opportunities for artists to promote their work in exhibitions that were administered outside the confines of the CSA council’s authority. The Society’s council responded to this environment somewhat ambiguously. In the first instance, it encouraged such groups, just as it had supported the Palette Club, by making its gallery available for exhibitions and lectures. However, the CSA was equally capable of indifference and sometimes, less than honourably, seeking to undermine the activities of these new organisations. However, to assume that its authority was seriously challenged would be wrong. Consideration of how the CSA responded both to economic circumstances and the emergence of new organisations seeking to support the arts, reveals that it maintained its influence, with serious artists ultimately remaining loyal to the Society and its annual autumn exhibitions right through this period.

Less than a week after the McDougall Gallery was opened, the CSA approved payment of accounts of £85.4.6 for restoration undertaken by Fishers Fine Arts for works in the permanent collection that it had presented to the City Council. This was followed in November by further approval for payment of £100 to Francis Shurrock for the commissioned relief sculpture of Robert McDougall, the donor of the new gallery. These and other conservation costs limited the Society’s operations. At the opening of the annual exhibition in 1933, CSA president, Dr G. M. L. Lester stated:

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2 CSA minutes, 21 June 1932.
3 CSA minutes, 1 November 1932.
After last year’s heavy expenses with the removal of a large part of its collection to the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, the Society was not in the position to buy any pictures from the exhibition for its collection.⁴

Circumstances were made worse by the depression, and in 1934 Lester announced that, for the first time in its history, the CSA had recorded a debt at the end of its financial year.⁵ Although the loss was small, such debts recurred over the next ten years. Sales from the annual exhibition in 1937 reached only £187, incurring a loss of £11.4.4.⁶ Debts at the end of the financial year were £3.16.5 in 1939,⁷ and £10.19.3 in 1941.⁸ Recurring liabilities were prolonged by the Second World War and accordingly, the Society’s expectations of profit were lowered. In 1943, the annual exhibition took place at Ballantynes’ department store due to the New Zealand army’s occupation of the Durham and Armagh Street galleries. The council recorded with satisfaction that the debt incurred by the show that year was only £14.12.1, which compared well with previous years.⁹

No doubt the lack of available funds had also been the reason for the decision in 1937 to place a donation box in the gallery to secure additional revenue for the acquisition of art works.¹⁰ (Plate 14) From 1932 to 1945, the CSA purchased only ten works for its collection and of these, only five were by Canterbury artists; Margaret Stoddart, Rata Lovell-Smith, Daisy Osbourn, Colin Lovell-Smith (Plate 15), and Juliet Peter.¹¹ To address the fall in income, Lester sought to raise membership, soliciting support at the annual exhibition in 1934 by reminding those attending of the significant contribution the Society had made, and would continue to make, to the arts in Canterbury. The Christchurch Times reported:

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⁴ *Art in New Zealand*, June 1933, Vol. 5, No. 20, p. 249.
⁵ CSA minutes, 20 November 1933 and *Christchurch Times*, 16 March 1934, p. 6. The debt recorded at the end of the financial year in November 1933 was £14.16.1.
⁶ CSA minutes, 29 June 1937.
⁷ CSA minutes, 2 November 1939.
⁸ CSA minutes, 25 November 1941.
⁹ CSA minutes, 29 June 1943.
¹⁰ CSA minutes, 26 October 1937.
¹¹ See Appendix 3.
Plate No. 14. Martha Biggins, exhibition cashier and attendant at the CSA from 1899 to 1959. This photograph was taken c. 1937.
Plate No. 15. Colin Lovell-Smith, *The North West Wind*, 1945, Oil on Board, 762mm x 914mm. This painting was purchased for the CSA collection for 50gns from its 65th annual exhibition.
In opening the exhibition, Dr G. M. L. Lester, the president of the society, said there was a false impression in some circles that, as the McDougall Gallery had been stocked with the society's pictures, the activities of the society were on the wane or had ceased altogether. That was not so. The society was carrying on as usual, and had a great work to do.... As one means of increasing activity a lady member had been enlisted as a canvasser for subscriptions.... “I appeal to you all to support the activities of the society.”

While Lester was making a plea for new members, the CSA was facing growing criticisms of its exhibitions, and the quality of work and its display. In 1932 sales from its Arts and Crafts Sketching exhibition were described as ‘the smallest on record.’ The review in the Christchurch Times claimed that it featured few art works of any substance: ‘The handcraft section is definitely poor in respect to the number of exhibitors, and little work of outstanding merit is shown.’

Criticisms had also been made of the Society at the exhibition openings of The Group, whose shows were held at the CSA’s Durham Street gallery from 1929. Formed by an alliance of former art students in 1927, The Group’s members had the opportunity to profile their work outside the more crowded displays of the CSA’s annual shows. However, although the majority of artists participating in The Group exhibitions continued to contribute to the Society’s shows, publicly a division was perceived to exist between the organisations. In 1932 the Professor of Education, James Shelley, opened The Group exhibition at the Durham Street gallery, emphasising the contemporary nature of the show in comparison with the Society’s exhibitions. Art in New Zealand reported:

[Shelley] was prepared to find in the work of Christchurch artists... the beginning of a new movement.... Comparisons between the work usually hung at the more sedate Society of Arts’ annual exhibitions and that of the 1932 Group

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12 Christchurch Times, 16 March 1934, p. 6.
13 CSA minutes, 16 November 1932.
14 Christchurch Times, 9 November 1932, p. 8.
were inevitable. The former is mannered in the old school, the latter in the new school.\textsuperscript{16}

Shelley was critical of the CSA, making comparisons between the virtues of the smaller Group exhibitions, drawing attention to the large number of works in the CSA’s shows and the accompanying lack of organisation in their display:

The more we see of this year’s exhibition, the more we feel that it would be vastly improved by being reduced by a third in the number of pictures hung (and this third would include some by well-known members of the society), and by hanging more carefully. Apart from the scattering of pictures by individual artists which would be best kept together, there are certain juxtapositions that do aesthetic violence to the painters concerned.\textsuperscript{17}

Regardless of this, the CSA maintained its support for the growing numbers of working members, no doubt pleased to receive the revenue that they provided to the Society through their annual subscriptions. By 1930 working members numbered 445 and inevitably this meant that works in its annual exhibitions were crowded together with little consideration for editing. In contrast, The Group exhibitions allowed artists to select the works they displayed, ensuring that they could present a unified body of paintings.\textsuperscript{18} Shelley’s commented that the 1931 Group exhibition gave the participating artists ‘sufficient chance to say what they feel they must say.’\textsuperscript{19} More recently, Julie Catchpole observed that comparisons with the CSA’s exhibitions consistently drew attention to the independence of artists in The Group:

This absence of a [CSA] jury, (plate 16) which meant that The Group exhibited all the work sent in by artists, was consistently commented on in reviews up until the Retrospective Show in 1947. Reviewers noted with satisfaction that the artists could be their own critics with respect to deciding what to show, and yet still produce an exhibition of generally higher quality.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{16} 'Art Notes,' \textit{Art in New Zealand}, December 1932, Vol. 5, No. 18, p. 97.
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Christchurch Times}, 4 April 1934, p. 14.
\textsuperscript{18} Catchpole, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{20} Catchpole, p. 48.
In 1935 when Lester opened The Group exhibition, he also reinforced differences between the institutions and admitted that he agreed with criticisms of the CSA’s shows:

“The Victorian age, with regards to pictures, was as bad as an age could be in the matter of taste,” said Dr Lester, “and its ideas still linger, fostered by that wretched society, the Royal Academy.”... “The annual exhibitions which we hold here,” continued Dr Lester, “pander to this taste, or lack of taste.... This shows how extremely important the smaller exhibitions may be. They are gathered together by people who love art, young folk who have tried to master by hand the technicalities of their subject. They are full of an adventurous spirit, and that is why this exhibition is far more exciting and interesting than the annual one.”

This may seem a surprising comment from the Society’s vice-president, but again it reveals the association between the institutions. The Group’s exhibitions were not seeking to challenge the CSA’s authority, but simply to provide an alternative opportunity for artists. The exhibiting members of the 1935 Group were well known to Lester as working members of the CSA: W. A. Baverstock, Louise Henderson, Rata Lovell-Smith, Ngaio Marsh and Cora Wilding. Lester perceived The Group’s shows as an additional arena for these artists, and one that complemented the grand event of the Society’s annual shows. This is confirmed by Ngaio Marsh, who later recalled: ‘There were no politics. We were not a bunch of rebels, or angries, [sic] we were a group of friends.’ Furthermore, the opening addresses at The Group shows appeared to make greater claims for the contemporary nature of the works on display than the reviews could confirm. Catchpole maintains that:

The idea of revolt was sown mainly by the opening speeches. The critics often had some difficulty in determining whether this was actually reflected in the work exhibited. But because The Group was an independent body of artists, it is not surprising that critics and guest speakers were prompted to suggest that

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21 Star-Sun, 9 October 1935, p. 5.
22 CSA minutes, 13 November 1934.
23 Press, 9 October 1935, p. 16.
24 Catchpole, p. 5.
25 Catchpole, p. 43.
the artists of The Group represented the “new school” and that “much of the work that is usually on view (at the CSA) is mannered in the older school.”

In reality, The Group’s members were pleased to support the Society’s exhibitions. Indeed, by 1937 the more progressive qualities of work praised in The Group shows were perceived by critics to be evident in the CSA’s exhibitions. The Press noted:

A gradual change is coming over the pictures shown at the annual exhibition.... Seven years ago scarcely anything painted with the modern palette or with the strong contrasts, emphasis on draughtsmanship and simplification of forms of the younger school, was shown. In the 1937 exhibition, which was opened at a private view last evening, the new manner predominates, and it appears not only in the work of younger painters, but in subtle differences in paintings by artists who have been long established.

In reality, the only members of The Group who publicly refused to be associated with the CSA’s shows were the ‘angry young men’ Leo Bensemann and M. T. Woollaston.

Neither was the CSA’s revenue from the sale of art works threatened by The Group exhibitions in its Durham Street gallery. The Group’s exhibition in November each year was separated from the Society’s autumn show in March by eight months. In addition, ‘The Group not only sold proportionally fewer works than the CSA, but the average sale price was also lower.’ In fact, members of The Group needed the Society’s exhibitions not only to further present their work, but also because they valued their association with the CSA. A number of regular participants in its exhibitions remained closely involved with the Society:

Group members who did not send works to society exhibitions were the exception, however, because if nothing else, these exhibitions provided a relatively inexpensive means of gaining exposure. Moreover, by the nineteen-

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26 Catchpole, p. 50.
27 Press, 19 March 1937, p. 4. This observation is also made by Catchpole, pp. 65-66.
28 Catchpole, p. 40 and Appendix 2. Bensemann was, however, a CSA working member from 1935 to 1940 as was Woollaston from 1961 to 1966, following the appointment of André Brooke as secretary in 1960.
29 Catchpole, p. 35.
forties some Group members were quite well established and had attained more influential positions in Art Society affairs. For example, Olivia Spencer Bower was a member of the Council of the CSA from 1940.... By then... other artists such as Rata Lovell-Smith and Louise Henderson, exhibited the same number of works at the Group show as elsewhere.\textsuperscript{30}.

However, the presence of The Group as an arts institution outside the dictates of the Society revealed a more critical environment for it than had previously been evident. The New Zealand Society of Artists (NZSA) was established in Christchurch in 1933 and declared that it would undermine art societies throughout the country.\textsuperscript{31} It was formed by the painter W. Basil Honour, who spoke of the frustrations felt by artists whose work was misunderstood by seemingly uninformed art society councils with no practical experience of art making:

\begin{quote}
Obviously those responsible are dissatisfied with existing institutions which, lacking enterprise, vision and directional force, have become more or less moribund. They have made the fundamental error of allowing laymen to become the arbiters of their destiny, and in the presentment of their exhibitions, frequently provide the ludicrous spectacle of the artistically inexpert judging art and artists.\textsuperscript{32}
\end{quote}

Honour maintained that artists should regain control of their affairs and accordingly, 'at least eight of the twelve who form the Management Committee' of the NZSA were required to be artist members.\textsuperscript{33} At first, the CSA council was unaware of, or indifferent towards, any need to respond to Honour’s challenge to the Society’s authority. This is hardly surprising. As representatives of the single institution that had supported artists in Canterbury for more than 50 years, the CSA council had good reason to believe that their ability was never seriously threatened. Indeed, the Society was pleased to offer support and approval to the new organisation, and made its gallery available to the NZSA for its exhibitions. Lester even provided public

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{30} Catchpole, p. 77.
\bibitem{31} \textit{Sun}, 9 March 1935, p. 9.
\bibitem{32} W. Basil Honour, 'The New Zealand Society of Artists,' \textit{Art in New Zealand}, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 24.
\bibitem{33} Honour, p. 27.
\end{thebibliography}
endorsement of the NZSA at the CSA’s annual exhibition in 1934, praising the new institution and wishing it every success:

...we welcome the New Zealand Society of Artists. That is an ambitious title, but they are keen, and they should live up to it. Their society is small, and I am told that they wish to keep it small, but it is a virile one, and should play a big part.34

Formed with the guidance and support of Shelley, the NZSA was the third arts organisation, alongside the Society for Imperial Culture (SFIC) and The Group that he had championed since his arrival in New Zealand in 1920.35 Appointed to the Chair of education at Canterbury College, Shelley arrived in Christchurch with a passion for art and drama and a belief in the value of education as vital to the lives of all people. He lectured in art history at Canterbury College and also reviewed the CSA’s annual exhibitions in the Lyttelton Times.36 However, although a dominant figure in drama in Canterbury he failed to exert a similar influence on the CSA. Shelley’s belief that the arts were of value to all in the community meant that he had little empathy for the more exclusive social occasions that characterised, for example, the opening of the Society’s annual exhibition and other social events. In addition, he was unable to establish close professional or personal relationships with the CSA’s more influential council members, Cecil Kelly, Archibald Nicoll (Plate 17), and Wallwork. Consequently, Shelly focussed his energies elsewhere, and through the SFIC, The Group and finally the NZSA, he effectively led a campaign against the CSA’s prevailing influence, encouraging alternative opportunities for artists.37 This advocacy of the work of young Canterbury artists reveals something of his belief in the principles of the Pre-Raphaelites movement:

[Shelley believed] that progress in art was, and could be accomplished by the vigour of break-away groups of artists, and he hoped that through the Christchurch Group “much talent would come to life." The years in which

34 Christchurch Times, 16 March 1934, p. 6.
36 Ibid
Plate No. 17. Archibald Nicoll (c. 1940) was a CSA council member from 1921-1952 and Director of Canterbury College School of Art from 1920-1927.
Shurrock was involved with the Group (1931-1932) and the NZSoA (1933-1934) were his most artistically vital and productive.\textsuperscript{38}

As a dominating influence in art education, Shelley’s absence from the minutes of the CSA throughout the 1920s and 1930s is telling. It reflects badly on the Society’s inability to make good use of his remarkable skills, and hints at the increasingly insular culture of its council, and public criticisms of the CSA council as a coterie.\textsuperscript{39}

Such criticisms were certainly highlighted by its failure to provide support for the work of younger Canterbury artists through the SFIC’s travelling scholarships. The SFIC was established by CSA working member, Rosa Sawtell, in 1921.\textsuperscript{40} It offered broad-based support for the arts, encompassing painting, drama, music, and dance, and Shelley assumed a significant position as president until 1936.\textsuperscript{41} It provided innovative lectures such as those on the subjective nature of modern art by artist James Fitzgerald in 1933,\textsuperscript{42} and Shelley’s discussion of the artist’s role in society.\textsuperscript{43} In 1926 it awarded a scholarship to James Cook, allowing him to travel to Great Britain and Europe, studying in Edinburgh at the College of Art, the Scottish Academy, and in Rome.\textsuperscript{44} However, when the SFIC requested the CSA council’s assistance to approach shipping companies for a free passage to England in support of the award, the Society was found wanting. Its secretary, George Donaldson, was advised to reply that, although temporarily on hold, he could not act, ‘owing to a scheme which they already had in hand.’\textsuperscript{45} In reality, the CSA’s plans never emerged. The SFIC may have even embarrassed the CSA further when it purchased art works for the CSA’s collection, raising £78.15 in 1928 for W. E. Webster’s \textit{The Blue Jacket} (Plate 18), which it subsequently gifted to the Society.\textsuperscript{46}

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\textsuperscript{38} Catchpole, pp. 47, 83.  
\textsuperscript{39} Press, 27 August 1936, p. 10.  
\textsuperscript{40} Carter, Gadfly, p. 192.  
\textsuperscript{41} Carter, Gadfly, pp. 192-193.  
\textsuperscript{42} Christchurch Times, 1 May 1933, p. 3.  
\textsuperscript{43} Press, 1 November 1937, p. 12.  
\textsuperscript{45} CSA minutes, 10 October 1922.  
\textsuperscript{46} Carter, Gadfly, p. 193.
\end{flushleft}
Plate No. 18. W. E. Webster, *The Blue Jacket*, 1928, 760mm x 853mm. This painting was presented to the CSA by the Society for Imperial Culture (SFIC) in 1928. It had been purchased by the SFIC through a public subscription for £78.15.0 from the Murray Fuller Collection of touring British art works.
Like the SFIC, the NZSA also acquired works by Canterbury artists for the public collection, and provided additional support through its exhibitions, art lectures, and touring shows of contemporary art. Upon its establishment it had 105 members, including the members of The Group, which had merged its membership with the new organisation. Its first exhibition was favourably received. The Press drew attention to the contemporary work on display, claiming that 'there is plenty of life and vitality in the work of New Zealand artists.' It held an excitement, so the newspaper maintained, that engaged the curiosity of the wider community, as 'rarely has so much interest been manifest by students and the general public in a display of pictures, sculptures, and crafts.' The NZSA initiated public subscriptions to encourage the purchase of work by local artists, at a time when the CSA struggled to acquire paintings for its collection. Such inactivity by the latter must have reflected poorly on the Society’s capabilities. The NZSA took a further initiative by securing a touring exhibition of British art through the Empire Collection Society. However, Lester expressed caution in his support for the touring exhibition, maintaining that financially it was beyond the CSA’s means:

if the citizens of Christchurch would guarantee £300 however, the exhibition could be held, and a public meeting was being organised with that end in view. If that came to pass the society would offer the hospitality of the Gallery.

The CSA’s failure to immediately assist with the show may seem like a missed opportunity. However, it must be qualified by the Society’s concern for its financial circumstances during this period and its history and experience in successfully supporting the arts for more than fifty years. In contrast, the NZSA retained a youthful enthusiasm for the Empire Loan Collection that the CSA tempered with experience. However, the exhibition turned out to be well supported, with a total attendance of more than 11,000 adults and secondary school students. The NZSA secured public cash guarantees to fund the exhibition and refunded 2/3 of the £415

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47 *Sun*, 31 October 1934, p. 8. The NZSA proposed the purchase of work by Sydney Thompson for the Robert McDougall Art Gallery.
49 *Press*, 26 October 1933, p. 16.
50 *Press*, 3 November 1933, p. 8.
51 *Press*, 16 July 1934, p. 5.
52 *Christchurch Times*, 16 March 1934, p. 6.
53 *Press*, 16 July 1934,
required to those who had contributed, having received admission fees totalling £335.54.54

Despite this promising start, by 1935 conflicting opinions in the ranks of the NZSA over intentions to extend the organisation beyond Christchurch and the interest of ‘members... trying to use the society as a weapon against another society,’ ensured its collapse.55 Following its liquidation, it was suggested to the CSA council that it join the Empire Collection Society and act as its representative in Christchurch. The motion was put to the CSA council which rejected it on the grounds that such touring exhibitions did not support New Zealand artists as they provided art works for sale in competition with local paintings. Furthermore, the Society argued that the interest in the Empire Loan exhibition in Christchurch had been relatively small,56 and the whole project was too expensive.57 Such an explanation however, is not credible. In 1935 the CSA acquired paintings by British artists, Dame Laura Knight and Harry Watson, paying a collective purchase price of 113 guineas.58 These were the first acquisitions in three years and, in view of the CSA’s statement regarding support for local artists, and the limited funds available, are remarkable choices.59 In addition, the Empire collection exhibition had been well attended, successfully raising public interest in the arts, and had included floor talks by artists such as Sydney Thompson.60 The council’s criticisms of this exhibition reveal a deliberate intention to play down the success and critical voice of the NZSA. This is further evident in a motion passed by the CSA following the NZSA’s inaugural exhibition in 1934, in which the Society’s council decided that any art works previously exhibited in Christchurch would be rejected for display in the CSA’s exhibitions.61 Such a response was unnecessary and reflected poorly on the Society. More importantly, however, the demise of the NZSA represented Shelley’s final attempt to act as an important arts advocate in Canterbury. From 1935 his involvement diminished, and with it, any accompanying threat: ‘The

54 Ibid.
55 Sun, 9 March 1935, p. 9. Why members of the NZSA were seeking to use the organisation to challenge another society is not explained in public records.
56 CSA minutes, 10 July 1935.
57 CSA minutes, 16 July 1935.
58 CSA minutes, 31 May 1935.
59 Dame Laura Knight, Les Sylphides from the back of the Stage, and Harry Watson, Meall Bridhe, Rannoch, are now in the Collection of the Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu.
60 Press, 16 July 1935, p. 5.
61 CSA minutes, 13 November 1934.
NZSA’s death meant Shelley’s eclipse: so prominent in *Art in New Zealand’s* Christchurch reports until the end of 1934, he simply disappears after that date.62

However, in spite of the CSA’ failings in dealing with Shelley or the NZSA, it would be unfair to maintain that from 1932 the Society had become wholly characterised by reactionary attitudes, or that it failed to seek new ways to support the arts, either through intention or limited finances. In addition to its encouragement of The Group, in 1933 Lester reported to the *Press* that representatives from the Carnegie Corporation were to visit Christchurch with an interest in providing financial support to worthy institutions that nurtured the arts.63 Subsequently, the Carnegie Corporation sponsored an exhibition of Canadian regionalist landscapes in 1938 held at the Durham Street gallery.64 The exhibition was influential in confirming the principles and directions of those Canterbury artists pursuing similar concerns and the *Press* commented approvingly on the value of such a show:

> Apart from its interest in revealing the different approach of the artists to their problems in their use of colour and their expressive grasp of composition, the exhibition will be additionally valuable if it suggests that something may be achieved in the development of expressive genre painting in New Zealand. Seeing such work is a valuable experience for artist and layman alike.65

In fact, the CSA held a significant number of touring exhibitions from Britain, Europe and Australia during the 1930s and 1940s. At the annual general meeting in 1937 it was reported that:

> The society conducted an exhibition of paintings, etchings, and drawings which was lent by the National Gallery of New South Wales. This exhibition was probably the best all-round collection ever shown in New Zealand and created a very favourable impression. The society also exhibited a collection of etchings lent by the Twenty-One Gallery, London.... The society also lent the gallery to the City Council for the exhibition of Dutch and Flemish masters.... About

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63 *Press*, 24 March 1933, p. 15.
64 *Press*, 2 December 1937, p. 4.
65 *Press*, 16 November 1938, p. 6.
January 24 the society hopes to open the exhibition from the Tate and National
Galleries.66

CSA council members also sought greater community involvement. In 1937,
Thompson and Wallwork provided artists’ talks on Radio 3YA and a subcommittee,
consisting of Kelly, Nicoll and Wallwork, was formed to popularise the Society’s
activities. It was also suggested in 1940 that the CSA displayed works of art beyond
the gallery in outlets such as Beath’s department store.67 Changes were apparent in
the CSA’s annual exhibitions with evidence of more progressive influences from the
mid-1930s. By 1942 the Press was pleased to praise the annual exhibition for the
inclusion of the ‘new and unusual’:

There are a number of new contributors this year whose work is decidedly
interesting and several pictures by younger artists which show remarkable
development. There are also some pictures directly inspired by the war and
present social conditions which will no doubt provoke controversy.68

Finally, although causing disruption to the Society’s regular exhibition schedule, the
New Zealand army’s occupation of the CSA galleries from July 1942 until December
1946,69 which forced the council to find alternative exhibition rooms, advanced the
presence of such shows in the wider community. The CSA secretary, William Sykes
Baverstock, (1893–1975), secured Ballantynes’ Department Store for the CSA annual
exhibitions from 1943 until 1946,70 and in 1945 it registered its strongest sales for
sixteen years totalling £767.11.0,71 with £70 available for the purchase of work for its
collection.72

This financial success was matched by a new-found optimism which was confirmed
by Baverstock in a 1945 radio broadcast in which he requested that the public support

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66 Press, 2 November 1937, p. 4.
67 CSA minutes, 8 February and 26 February 1940.
68 Press, 10 March 1942, p. 8.
69 CSA minutes, 22 July and 3 December 1946. It was recorded in July that the army intended to
vacate the gallery by September, but the CSA held its annual exhibition that year in the Chamber of
Commerce building and a request was made in December that the army restore the gallery to its
previous state.
70 CSA minutes, 29 June 1943.
71 CSA minutes, 19 June 1945.
72 CSA minutes, 28 February 1945.
the Society, as he championed its history and benefits to the community.\textsuperscript{73} That year the president, Arthur E. Flower, also reviewed the Society's progress and made note of its improved circumstances.\textsuperscript{74} His observations expressed a change in the environment in which the CSA, and other arts organisations, had operated over the previous thirteen years. Flower called for the support of young New Zealand artists, indicating that the uncertainty prevalent throughout the 1930s had been replaced by a desire for progress in the post-war period. As the CSA set about this task, however, its council was unaware of the directions and significant challenges they would face as a growing modern movement asserted a presence in New Zealand. While the Society had survived serious challenges from the NZSA and Shelley, and received a welcome 'shot in the arm' from The Group, by the late 1940s its authority in the arts would be more seriously questioned and council members who had dominated proceedings since the early 1930s would be called to account.

\textsuperscript{73} W. S. Baverstock, 'The Art Society and You,' Baverstock Papers, 51 3B, Correspondence 1902-1970, Box 1.

\textsuperscript{74} CSA minutes, 11 December 1945.

All Christchurch painters were pleased to hear that Mr. W. S. Baverstock had been appointed to the secretaryship of the Canterbury Society of Arts. Members of the Christchurch Society wish him success and happiness in his new position. (Art in New Zealand, September 1943.)

'The only handicap I labour under is the ill-informed criticism, ruthlessly and meanly exuded at Annual Meetings of the Canterbury Society of Arts.' (W. S. Baverstock, CSA News, November 1967.)

William Sykes Baverstock was appointed CSA secretary in August 1943, replacing Donaldson who had served the Society in that capacity for 27 years. (Plate 19) In contrast to Donaldson's unassuming reputation as an able accountant and 'friend and advisor to every member,' Baverstock was a more forceful personality. From the moment of his appointment, the CSA council was impressed by his sincere commitment to the position, characterised by his strong principles, administration skills and hard work. However, compared with Donaldson, Baverstock was not to be as affectionately remembered by the art community. He was secretary throughout a period of significant social and cultural change that was very different from Donaldson's world, and one in which the CSA's authority was publicly challenged. By the time of his resignation from the Society in 1959, Baverstock's tireless devotion to the arts was perceived by his critics as obstructing the development of a local modernism. In addition, the art community's condemnation of him continued following his resignation in his ongoing role as first director of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery. Baverstock had been honorary curator of the public gallery since 1948

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1 'News From the Centres,' Art in New Zealand, Vol. 16, No. 1, September 1943, p. 20.
3 CSA minutes, 3 and 17 August 1943.
4 'News From the Centres,' Art in New Zealand, Vol. 16, No. 1, September 1943, p. 20.
5 CSA minutes, 27 September 1944, Within thirteen months of his appointment Baverstock received an increase in his salary of £40, following his presentat on and recommendations on a report on the New Zealand Art Societies.
Plate 19. William Sykes Baverstock, c. 1953. The exhibition of Neo-Romantic prints in the photograph are probably part of an exhibition of contemporary British lithographs that toured to the CSA gallery in September 1953.
and assumed collective administrative responsibility for both arts institutions until 1959, continuing at the McDougall Gallery until his enforced retirement in 1969. While influential as secretary in revitalising the Society’s commitment to the arts until the late 1940s, for all the wrong reasons, he would also be significant to the CSA’s further development in his position as director of the McDougall Gallery. As the Society extended its exhibition programme of local and touring contemporary shows, Baverstock’s directorship of the public gallery reflected an opposing perspective. W. A. Sutton much later claimed that Baverstock, ‘did more damage to art in the city than anyone I can recall.’ His management was professed by many in the art community to be conservative and obstinate during a time when the Society demonstrated an inclusive and lively commitment to contemporary local art. However, consideration of Baverstock’s role as CSA secretary will reveal both his early and positive contribution made through his meticulous administration, his commitment to art education, his development of a collection policy centred upon support for New Zealand art, his pioneering documentation of the arts in Canterbury and, conversely, the ways in which he also sought to frustrate the advancement of a local modernism. More importantly however, the transition in perceptions of Baverstock, from a respected and dynamic influence on the arts to that of an obstinate reactionary, also reflects wider changes that impacted permanently on the CSA and the arts in New Zealand during this period:

Art education boomed in schools and community classes.... Dealer galleries sprang up, sporadically and short-lived in the 1950s and 60s, but firmly established in the 1970s. A series of new artistic concerns appeared as an infrastructure for art gradually emerged.... For many smaller galleries these developments were accompanied by the appointment of their first professional staff, prompting power struggles as they sought to break free from the amateur embrace of local art societies.10

In this post-war environment the CSA’s authority was seriously questioned. Unlike Baverstock, however, a number of the CSA council rose to these challenges and

8 Press, 13 October 1975, p. 16.
throughout the 1960s and early 1970s the Society was to experience its most active and important era of service to the arts in its history.

Baverstock was born in 1893 in Norwich, England and emigrated to New Zealand in 1901 when his father, William Baverstock senior was appointed head of the lithographic department of the Press. Acknowledged as a highly skilled lithographer and designer, his father’s work for the newspaper was widely admired and undoubtedly influenced William junior, who demonstrated considerable ability and interest in the arts. In 1906, as a student at Richmond School, he won first prize for a drawing titled My Pets in the annual CSA Canterbury schools’ competition, ‘Studies from Nature.’ He attended evening classes at Canterbury College School of Art from 1910 to 1917, winning two scholarships for advanced design and a first class diploma from the CSA. From 1910 until 1928 he was employed at the Press, assisting his father, and bringing a similar care and precision to his work in design and lettering. This work encompassed a number of publications, including the Christmas issues of the Weekly Press and the New Zealand Traveller. His art was characterised by the influence of his training in the arts and crafts movement prevalent during his years at Canterbury College. The same year in which Baverstock received first prize for his ‘study from nature,’ the International Exhibition opened in Hagley Park, showcasing the arts and crafts movement in Christchurch. Baverstock’s art remained faithful to the aesthetics and philosophy of William Morris and Walter Crane throughout his life. He was also influenced in his beliefs about the role of art in the wider community by Samuel Hurst Seager and, later, James Shelley. Seager lectured in architecture and decorative design at the Canterbury College School of Art from 1893 until 1918, while Shelley was appointed professor of

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11 Press, 13 October 1975, p. 16.
13 CSA Exhibition Catalogue, 1906.
14 Night Classes, 6/2 Item 70. 1896-1913 School of Art Student lists and 6A Item 66B 1903-1924, Evening class, Canterbury College School of Art, University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts.
15 H. S. Baverstock, p. 38.
16 O’Neill, p. 171.
17 H. S. Baverstock, p. 2.
Education at Canterbury College in 1920,\textsuperscript{20} bringing a ‘Morristsite socialism’\textsuperscript{21} to his lectures that Baverstock also espoused. As a designer for the \textit{Press}, his illustrations fulfilled the principles of the arts and crafts movement with an economy of outline, rendering patterns from nature in geometric and symmetrical designs, and with a popular accessibility that could reach the homes of all Canterbury residents.\textsuperscript{22}

Baverstock was elected a working member of the CSA in 1917,\textsuperscript{23} but only exhibited on five occasions between 1914 and 1928.\textsuperscript{24} His commitment to the arts really lay in his enthusiasm for administration and organisation. This was evidence of his sincere, Christian belief in the betterment of humanity through community service. He was a founding member of the Sunlight League of New Zealand, working from 1931 until 1948 to promote a better quality of life for young New Zealanders. This incorporated education on diet, the provision of milk in schools, tramping, and the development of the Youth Hostel Movement.\textsuperscript{25} He was also chairman of the tramping committee which launched the Youth Hostel Movement and, according to his brother, was influential in the introduction of milk in schools through his negotiations with the Minister of Health, Peter Fraser.\textsuperscript{26} In addition, he was a life-long member of the Christchurch Savage Club, joining in 1920 and contributing illustrations to programmes and productions, as well as writing verse and songs for its performances.\textsuperscript{27} The Christchurch Savage Club was established in 1893 by wealthy and educated gentlemen in Christchurch with the intention of ‘promoting good fellowship, of fostering rational amusement, and of teaching by practice, in the presence of friendly critics, how to amuse.’\textsuperscript{28} By the time that Baverstock joined, it had lost some of its exclusivity.\textsuperscript{29} However, he greatly enjoyed the company and humour of his fellow ‘savages,’ drawing numerous cartoons of the Club’s ‘great chiefs’ from the 1920s until the 1970s.\textsuperscript{30} Although increasingly perceived as old-
fashioned in its sentiments and entertainment, (and today profoundly politically incorrect), for Baverstock the Savage Club retained principles of friendship that he valued throughout his life. In 1968 he declared:

The clubs will I believe, survive the body-blow of television. You can’t strike up a warm friendship with a T.V. set, and I am thankful for experiencing many in the Christchurch Savage Club since 1920, which has meant a lot to me.31

From 1928 until his appointment as CSA secretary in 1943 Baverstock worked as a freelance designer, graphic artist and photographer,32 and became actively involved in the administration of exhibitions at the CSA and the new McDougall Gallery. During this period he was also active with artists’ groups who were sometimes perceived to be challenging the CSA’s authority. He was a founding member of The Group,33 exhibiting in its shows until 1936, and a member of the council of the New Zealand Society of Artists in 1933 and 1934.34 He also assisted with the administration of The Group’s affairs while maintaining a public profile as an exhibitor. In the 1929 Group show, Shelley praised Baverstock’s ‘well-known cartoons,’ singling out the ‘most attractive piece from an artistic point of view [being] the man “Addressing a Meeting.” We feel that the ease of these realistic studies is worth much more than the popular caricatures.’35 Baverstock assumed prominence in these early exhibitions, and was photographed for the Press prior to the opening of the 1931 show alongside James Cook and Francis Shurrock. In addition, his work was reproduced in the newspaper that year beside R. N. Field’s Christ at the Well and Shurrock’s Garden Ornament.36 Socially, Baverstock also maintained connections with The Group, with a 1936 diary entry noting the good opening attendance that year, and a ‘party at Louise Henderson’s after.’37 On occasions Baverstock acted as public spokesman,

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31 Christchurch Savage Club papers, Folder 48, Canterbury Museum.
32 Press, 13 November 1959, p. 15.
34 H. S. Baverstock, p. 48.
36 Press, 10 September 1931, p. 11 and 12 September 1931, p. 17.
opening its 1940 exhibition,\(^{38}\) and writing a declaration of its intentions, published in *Art in New Zealand* in 1929:

We are a group flying no standard; we have no plank or platform, nor do we make one of having none. The work of each member is distinct, we are representative of no school; we are not afraid of the new, nor do we attempt to reduce anything to a formula.\(^{39}\)

This article was also critical of the CSA, particularly the scale of the institution:

One can, of course, be loyal to a big society, but one cannot really know it, one cannot always comprehend the ruling of its collective mind; its exhibitions are, and must be, bazaar-like and bewildering and it retains the coldness of an institution.\(^{40}\)

Baverstock’s frustration with the CSA was felt by many working artists seeking to exhibit at the Society which grew rapidly throughout the 1920s; by 1930, it had 445 working members.\(^{41}\) For professional artists competing for exhibition space amongst numerous amateurs, The Group provided a welcome alternative, allowing serious artists to choose work for its exhibitions and focussing on art of a more vital and often progressive intention. But as future secretary of the CSA, how did Baverstock come to be involved in the establishment of an association of artists perceived to be breaking away from the Society? The answer lies in his admiration and enthusiasm for that ‘dynamic man,’ James Shelley,\(^{42}\) who maintained that The Group could be compared to the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood as an association of artists that challenged artistic conventions.\(^{43}\) This comparison would have found immediate favour with the arts and crafts-trained Baverstock.

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\(^{38}\) *Press*, 23 September 1940, p. 8. The newspaper incorrectly described him as president of The Group.


\(^{40}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{41}\) Catchpole, p. 5.

\(^{42}\) Interview, John Simpson, 5 January 2006. Baverstock’s biography also includes a sketch of Shelley with the title ‘dynamic man’ in the lower right corner. See H. S. Baverstock, facing p. 18.

\(^{43}\) Catchpole, p. 47.
Consistent with this was Baverstock’s election to the committee of New Zealand Society of Artists in 1933. Formed by artist W. Basil Honour, championed by Shelley and more radical in intention than The Group, Honour’s criticism of art societies defined its agenda at its founding meeting. The Press reported:

The very restricted activities of the existing art societies were then commented upon, and the urgent need emphasised of such further endeavours to advance art as were completed by the organisers of the new society.... To encourage a definite development in artistic achievement among New Zealand artists, to interest the general public in the living movements in art and foster the understanding and appreciation of original work, to encourage and assist students.

Honour emphasised that artists must control their own affairs and act independently of the societies. However, to assume that Baverstock was prepared to radically challenge the CSA’s authority would be misleading. In the first instance, his frustration with the Society’s large working membership was shared by many artists. Secondly, his admiration for Shelley undoubtedly influenced his participation in both The Group and the New Zealand Society of Artists’ exhibitions, reflecting his capacity to be guided by strong personalities. Arguably, Baverstock’s 1929 manifesto for The Group was as reactionary as it was radical. It was consistent with his commitment to the principles of his arts training, and his perception that modern art was fraudulent:

There is a depressing sameness in the mass of modern art which cannot be the result of inspiration. Fashion has much to answer for. It is very easy to be unkind but, surely, the painter who prates of “pattern” – or what not – and works to a formula, and the collector who buys the result should be told, politely, that what they do may be in the interests of misapplied science, but certainly not of Art.

44 Press, 10 July 1933, p. 8.
45 Ibid.
46 Interview, Simpson, 5 January 2006 and John Coley, 4 February 2005.
Baverstock remained faithful to this opinion and loyal to the teachings of Seager. In 1946 he assisted the District Council of Adult Education in Timaru in holding an exhibition of arts and crafts. In an accompanying article for the *Timaru Herald*, he outlined his faith in the capacity of the arts to impart ‘dignity and beauty’ to all humanity. He also contrasted the values of the arts and crafts movement with the ‘disrepute’ of modern art, maintaining that it was meaningless to those living in provincial New Zealand:

Every now and then what is known as the Art World becomes news. Few have not read of the controversy raging around the London exhibitions of work by Picasso and Matisse which, like the earlier disquiet provoked by a picture by Dobell in Australia, made colourful news. But so does the Underworld. Indeed, until we begin to correct our mental perspective, the Art World would seem to be as productive of outrages as the Underworld and to vie with it in disrepute…. [This] writer’s chief concern… is not with what is known as the Art World, but with something very different and of far more importance: the place of Art in the world and particularly in the homes of South Canterbury…. Good taste in needlecraft is to be found in the homes of refugees in New Zealand, but too seldom in our own. It can be said however, that interest in the production of good handicraft in New Zealand is increasing and that time will enable us to speak very differently of the mass of what is now hybrid, vulgar and debased…. To assist in awakening further interest in all fine arts and crafts is the object of this article which serves as an introduction to the Exhibition of Arts and Crafts being organised in South Canterbury…. Sir Ernest Pooley, chairman of the British Arts Council, surely speaks for all of us when he says: “What we want is to build up a real love of the arts that will be active all the year round.”

Certainly, Baverstock’s utopian vision of the arts contributed to his initial revitalisation of the CSA, following his appointment as secretary. He was equally well-suited to the position as an experienced administrator, not only through his involvement with community groups such as the Sunlight League of New Zealand, but also through the supervision of touring exhibitions. In 1935 he was a member of the Executive of the Loan Exhibition of Oriental Art and in 1937 he contributed to the

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organising committee for the Loan Exhibition of Chinese Art, 2500 BC to 1800AD.\textsuperscript{49} The 1935 exhibition of the collection of Captain G. Humphrey-Davis, honorary curator of the Oriental section of Auckland Museum,\textsuperscript{50} consisted of porcelain from China, Japanese prints and Persian carpets, and Baverstock worked on a range of related activities. He illustrated the accompanying catalogue, secured advertising and arranged publicity. His hard work was recognised through the presentation of a copy of the exhibition catalogue signed by Humphrey-Davis and bound in leather with Baverstock’s initials stamped in gold letters.\textsuperscript{51}

The 1937 exhibition was also assembled by Humphrey-Davies and included bronze, porcelain, jade and embroidery, with loan items from the collections of Queen Mary and the Victoria and Albert Museum.\textsuperscript{52} As it comprised more than 300 examples of Chinese art,\textsuperscript{53} the range and number of exhibits required considerable setting up, and Baverstock assumed responsibility for securing additional display cases from local businesses.\textsuperscript{54} His efforts were recognised by Dr J. Guthrie when the exhibition opened, who thanked ‘the business people of Christchurch who had lent the show cases which enabled the collection to be attractively presented.’\textsuperscript{55} By the late 1930s Baverstock was recognised as a knowledgeable arts administrator and a serious artist. Not only was his work included in the 1940 National Centennial Exhibition of New Zealand Art alongside practicing artists such as Rita Angus and M. T. Woollaston,\textsuperscript{56} but he was also a member of the Christchurch section of the exhibition,\textsuperscript{57} assisting in its assembly when it opened at the Durham Street gallery on 16 April 1940.\textsuperscript{58}

Consequently, it was entirely understandable that Baverstock’s appointment as the Society’s secretary was welcomed by the art community. While his predecessor, Donaldson, may have been well-liked, according to Honour, he would have also represented the layman’s voice whose presence in the art societies allowed the

\textsuperscript{49} H. S. Baverstock, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Press}, 12 September 1936, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{51} H. S. Baverstock, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Press}, 11 May 1937, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Press}, 12 September 1936, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{54} H. S. Baverstock, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Press}, 12 May 1937, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{56} Dr A. H. McLintock, \textit{National Centennial Exhibition of New Zealand Art}, Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1940, pp. 20-77.
\textsuperscript{57} H. S. Baverstock, p. 38.
\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Press}, 17 April, 1940, p. 3.
artistically inexpert to judge an artist’s work. From 1943 until 1948, confidence in Baverstock’s ability to advance the arts was surely well-placed. He was a secretary with an unprecedented dedication, bringing a greater commitment to detailing the CSA’s affairs and proposing recommendations to extend its influence. At its meeting on 12 August 1946, he presented a vision for the Society informed by his loyalty:

The personal note in this report is unavoidable because I have had the substance of it in mind for many years, and accepted my present position in the hope that when the war ended I should have the honour of promoting developments, both intensive and extensive, of our Society’s work.

Baverstock advocated closer relationships between the CSA and its working members, requesting a club room and library for such purposes, and implementing smaller measures such as introducing afternoon teas at the annual general meeting and floor talks by artists and the screening of films on the arts. He called for the revival of prizes and medals for artists to complement those given to graduates by the School of Art. He re-defined the CSA’s collection policy, arguing that since many of the art works held in the McDougall Gallery were by British painters, the Society’s works should be distinguished from it as the nucleus of a permanent collection of New Zealand art. From 1932 to 1946 there were only fifteen acquisitions and these varied from English works on paper to retrospective purchases, including three watercolours by Margaret Stoddart in 1935. The City Council’s cancellation of its annual purchasing grant in 1931 and the lack of funds available throughout the 1930s and early 1940s must have brought into question the CSA’s faith in the eminence of its collection, particularly following the presentation of many of the best works to the

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60 CSA minutes, 9 July 1942 and 22 July 1946. Baverstock appears to have waited until 1946 to make this address due to the army’s occupation of the Durham and Armagh Street galleries. The army had occupied the building since July 1942 and Baverstock had been assured it would be vacated by September 1946.
61 CSA minutes 12 August 1946. Baverstock’s document, ‘Developments,’ is attached with the minutes.
62 CSA minutes, 22 July 1946.
63 Appendix 3.
64 No works were purchased from the CSA’s annual exhibitions from 1933 to 1937, or from 1939 to 1941. The poor financial state of the CSA and the need for new members was referred to in minutes on 24 November 1936, and a suggested donation box for a picture fund was discussed by the CSA council on 26 October 1937.
McDougall Gallery. Baverstock’s notion of a permanent collection of New Zealand art was timely, and undoubtedly also expressed the sentiment of many council members. Indeed, the acquisition of two works in 1945, Colin Lovell-Smith’s Nor’ Wester and Juliet Peter’s Sheep Sale, anticipated his formalising such opinion. These works represented the first of a number of significant acquisitions during Baverstock’s years as secretary that included W. A. Sutton, Passing Shadow Near Wakatipu, (1946), Evelyn Page, Lambton Quay (1950), Frances Hodgkins, Barn in Picardy (1950), Austen Deans, Camp in Kowai (1952), Lois White, Self Portrait (1953), and Ivy Fife, Royal Visit (1954). Although Baverstock was not able to vote on such acquisitions, it should be noted that he was influential in purchases made by the City Council while director of the McDougall Gallery. He assumed a predominant role in matters relating to the CSA and the McDougall Gallery collections until his retirement in 1969.

Moreover, Baverstock also introduced a number of practical measures to improve the Society’s finances. In 1946 he re-established public art unions, which had been discontinued in 1938, increasing their sale and the gallery’s revenue by printing advance tickets available prior to the opening of the annual exhibition. This was also intended to encourage the purchase of artists’ work with Baverstock setting sales targets for the annual exhibition at more than £1,000. In 1945 the CSA achieved its best sales figures for 16 years of £767.11.0. When the 1946 exhibition opened, the Society had sold a record 1,700 art union tickets, with prizes to the value of £81.18.0, while exhibition sales had risen that year to £932.

Accompanying this financial success, Baverstock also extended the CSA’s influence to the wider community through a series of proposals informed by the sentiments of Hurst Seager and Shelley:

65 Press, 7 January 1960, and interview, Simpson, 5 January 2005. Simpson also confirmed that Baverstock was capable of articulating this collection policy.
66 H. S. Baverstock, pp. 14, 26. His brother, Harry, noted that during William’s time at the McDougall Gallery he secured 141 additional works for the collection and reframed and restored numerous other works.
67 CSA minutes, 16 March 1946.
68 CSA minutes, 14 November 1942.
69 CSA minutes, 19 June 1945.
70 CSA minutes, 8 April 1945.
71 CSA minutes, 16 March 1946.
72 CSA minutes, 22 July 1946.
As our Society is the only body in Canterbury holding property for the express purpose of carrying out the Trust of promoting the Fine Arts, I suggest that we take the lead in reaching all sections of the community by means of:

- personal visits and talks, where practicable in factories, schools, community centres, clubs, (Canterbury women’s etc) and other places of assembly.
- Recorded talks (where visits impracticable, or to supplement them) for circulation with pictures from our Lending Library and with touring exhibitions of work. Broadcast talks, and in the near future, televised demonstrations.
- Slides and other approved methods. Further, that we co-operate, when it suits our main purpose, with organisations such as the British Council, CEMA, Empire Loan Collection Society, Adult Education Dept. of Canterbury College, Canterbury Museum, WEA, etc.73

Baverstock acted almost immediately on a number of these ideas. Within a year the CSA’s picture lending scheme increased from the hire of 30 to more than 80 Medici prints; including Temuka District High School, St. Albans School and the Canterbury Repertory Theatre Society which were among the organisations which benefited from it.74 In addition, following the 1945 annual exhibition he was interviewed on 3YA radio where he championed the Society’s aims to ‘promote the study, practice and cultivation of the fine arts.’ He also encouraged artists’ floor talks, including Canterbury painter, Austen Deans. The Society’s minutes in 1947 noted that

[The] Evening programme commenced on 4th June with a most interesting talk by Mr Austen Deans on “Life in Europe From Inside the Wire.” This was given in conjunction with the Exhibition of Polish War Pictures and Canadian Silk-screen reproductions, 120 persons attending on a cold night.75

Inspired by Shelley, Baverstock toured exhibitions beyond the Durham Street Gallery, including a selection of Canterbury paintings displayed at the Harewood Air Show,76 and an exhibition of arts and crafts in Timaru.

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73 CSA minutes, 12 August 1946. Document by Baverstock included in minutes.
74 CSA minutes, 19 June 1945 (notes by Baverstock) and 22 July 1946 (secretary’s report to Council).
75 CSA minutes, 22 July 1947.
76 CSA minutes, 19 June 1945. This includes attached notes by Baverstock detailing picture loans and the Harewood Air Show.
In the execution of all his duties, Baverstock worked with an unremitting diligence and zeal, supplying documentation and detail of all relevant business to the CSA council, and tabling responses and offering advice consistent with the Society’s principles and policies. From July 1944 he added a secretary’s reports to supplement the minutes, which included financial summaries of the Society’s annual exhibitions. Also in 1944 he responded to debate over the future of the Association of New Zealand Art Societies (ANZAS) by presenting the CSA council with a report from E. D. Gore, secretary of the NZAFA, which summarised the concerns of the Wellington Society, and concluded with his own recommendations as to how the CSA should proceed. The council responded favourably to his commitment and energy. Following the presentation of the ANZAS document, his annual salary was raised from £110 to £150 and he accompanied Archibald Nicoll (then president), to the annual meeting of ANZAS in Wellington. Within twelve months of his appointment, he had assumed a leading role in realising the Society’s vision and its management.

However, respect for Baverstock was to be seriously questioned and found wanting by an ever more vocal section of the art community. Increasingly, he came to represent a conservative, indeed reactionary voice in the arts, and was held to epitomise the perceived amateurism of art societies as New Zealand witnessed important changes in society and culture: ‘Permanent displays of traditional British and European art may have satisfied the public in the 1920s, but expectations changed after the Second World War.’

The authority of Baverstock and the CSA was challenged in 1948 during the public debate that took place over the decision of the Society’s council not to purchase any of the six paintings by Frances Hodgkins that had been sent on consignment by the

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78 CSA minutes, 21 September 1944.
79 McCredie, pp. 13-14
British Council from London. Following Hodgkins’s death, artist and CSA council member, Margaret Frankel, had proposed that a representative work by Hodgkins should be purchased for the Society’s collection, and in 1948 the CSA received six paintings for viewing. However, these were late career works, with a greater degree of abstraction than that of her painting up to the mid-1920s. As the council members were largely unfamiliar with and unfavourably disposed towards such work, agreement could not be reached as to their quality and in November 1948 a decision was made not to purchase any and return them to England. This provoked anger and resentment from those who championed modernism. Long-serving Society council members, Nicoll and Cecil Kelly, who represented the CSA on the City Council’s advisory purchasing committee, were singled out for attack. They remained steadfast in their refusal to place a work in the public collection until finally, in July 1951, *The Pleasure Garden*, (1932) one of the six works sent by the British Council, was accepted into the McDougall Gallery’s permanent collection, following the election of a new advisory committee which consisted of CSA council members, Russell Clark, Heathcote Helmore, Colin Lovell-Smith, Nicoll and Richard Wallwork.

*The Pleasure Garden* incident took the Society’s council entirely by surprise. Its members had no comprehension that any decision that they made regarding the arts would be questioned, as there had been no such precedent. However, it should also be noted that initially the conflicting opinions regarding Hodgkins’s painting were not so readily apparent. When the Society decided to seek out a work by Hodgkins in 1947, Baverstock wrote to Sutton who was living in London, asking for his opinion on works by Hodgkins then on view at the Lefevre Galleries. Although later to champion the purchase of *The Pleasure Garden*, he replied that he was ‘unfavourably

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81 CSA minutes, 27 May 1947.
82 CSA minutes, 11 November 1948.
83 Feeney, p. 110. The vote was four in favour and one against accepting the painting for the McDougall Gallery. No doubt Nicoll remain steadfast in his refusal to support the presentation of the work into the public gallery.
Plate No. 20. The CSA council judging entries for the 68th annual autumn exhibition in March 1948, six months prior to the 'Pleasure Garden Incident.'
impressed.85 Wallwork, who was on the advisory committee which later rejected the
gift of The Pleasure Garden for the McDougall Gallery, abstained from voting to
return the works to London in 1948.86 Russell Clark rejected all six works as
unworthy of the collection, maintaining that they were not of a high enough
standard,87 and that the £200 available could be better spent on the acquisition of
work by young local artists.88

Ultimately, however, the argument became less about the art work and more an
ideological war between certain CSA members, fighting for the relevance and
integrity of European modernism against conservative members who had tutored at
the Canterbury College School of Art, and whose principles were entrenched in the
teaching traditions of the South Kensington system.89 By 1949, lawyer and CSA
council member, Alan Brassington (1902-1981), who championed the acquisition of
Hodgkins’s work, described the debate as ‘War, bloody war, to the death!’90 He
singled out the School of Art and those CSA councillors at Canterbury College as the
principal enemy, and the reactionary group that welded a dominant role in the arts in
Canterbury. In a letter to the editor of Landfall, Charles Brasch, he identified himself,
CSA president, Arthur. E. Flower, R. S. Lonsdale and Wallwork as supporters of
Hodgkins, and listed the art school staff separately: Ivy Fife, Russell Clark, C. S.
Lovell-Smith, Nicoll, and W. A. Sutton.91 The absence of Sutton from Brassington’s
list of supporters may seem curious in view of his painting, Homage to Frances
Hodgkins, (1949) in which he paid tribute to The Pleasure Garden and its supporters,
including Sutton, Doris Lusk, Colin McCahon and Brassington.92 (Plate 21)
Although he may have initially been unenthusiastic about the six paintings by
Hodgkins, like many of those who later supported the presentation of The Pleasure
Garden into the public gallery’s collection, Sutton’s greater familiarity with such

85 CSA minutes, 23 September 1947.
86 CSA minutes, 11 November 1948.
87 Unidentified newspaper, 22 October 1948, Alan Brassington, The Pleasure Garden file, CAG 32.
88 Letter Brassington to Frankel, 9 October 1948, Frankel The Pleasure Garden file, CAG 32.
89 Roberts, pp. 24 – 25, and interview E. N. Bracey, 3 January 2006. Bracey placed particular
emphasis upon the continuing reliance of the South Kensington system which had been
introduced when the Canterbury College School of Art opened in 1882 and still operated until the
late 1950s.
90 Memo, Brassington to Brasch, 17 March 1949, Brasch Literary and Personal Papers, MS-
0096-002/043, Hocken Collections.
91 Letter. Brassington to Brasch, 6 January 1949, MS-0096-002/043, Hocken Collections.
92 Roberts, p. 65.
contemporary art works, encouraged a reconsideration and acceptance of the merits of European modernism. However, when the six paintings were initially displayed for public inspection at the 1948 Group exhibition,\textsuperscript{93} the art community became clearly divided with Baverstock, Kelly and Nicoll adamant in their opposition to the acquisition of any of the works. At the Society’s first meeting to view the paintings,\textsuperscript{94} Nicoll claimed that any purchase would be a waste of money, agreeing with Lovell-Smith that they were ‘dealer’s junk,’ and Kelly stated that ‘a child of six could have painted the lot.’\textsuperscript{95} He reiterated this comment to the newspapers a year later: ‘the tone is not good, the colour is not good and the composition is all over the place. A child could do it.’\textsuperscript{96}

Baverstock was entirely sympathetic to Kelly’s and Nicoll’s opinions. Moreover, his imprudent response to the display of the paintings at the 1948 Group exhibition inflamed debate between Hodgkins’s detractors and supporters into open hostility. Baverstock sought to limit publicity and discussion about the works by placing an accompanying notice alongside them which read:

\begin{quote}
These six works by Frances Hodgkins are under bond. It is not permissible to photograph them. It is requested that no reference be made to them in Press notices of the exhibition.\textsuperscript{97}
\end{quote}

The notice acted as a call to arms to those supporting the acquisition of one of the paintings. Brassington rallied supporters of the Hodgkins paintings to the exhibition opening, and artist Cora Wilding, angered by Baverstock’s, Kelly’s and Nicoll’s attitude, called for a petition for the purchase of a painting. Brassington described the tense atmosphere and incident in a letter to Frankel:

\begin{quote}
Monday 18 October the Group Show opened itself. No speeches – a moderate amount of beer and a reasonable sized crowd. I had written to Cora Wilding at Birch Hill, Oxford, also phoned her, and she came in, at some inconvenience, for the opening.... Well the six Hodgkins were on the wall – with a notice signed by
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{93} Press, 29 October 1948, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{94} CSA minutes, 1 October 1948.
\textsuperscript{95} Letter, Brassington to Margaret Frankel, 9 October 1948, Frankel, CAG 32.
\textsuperscript{96} Unidentified newspaper, 22 June 1949, Brassington, CAG. 32.
\textsuperscript{97} Note in file, Brassington, CAG 32.
Bav, [sic] stating that no reference to these pictures was to be made by newspapers!... Nicoll, Bav, [Rona] Fleming, etc had groups of conspirators around them. At nine o clock, Cora got worked up enough to get on a platform and address the group about the need to buy a Hodgkins etc. She and Cliff Collins then drew up a petition to the effect that the city should buy some or one of the Hodgkins, etc. Many snubbed her or refused to sign. However, she got about 20 signatures that night – the petition has been on the doorkeepers table during the group show and about 60 have signed it.98

Brassington further contacted the Press, inviting them to question Baverstock about the authenticity of the notice and the reason for its presence.99 Brassington had already received confirmation from customs that no conditions of entry into New Zealand for the Hodgkins paintings existed. He wrote to Frankel;

It was so stupid. I had seen the Customs and ascertained that they had imposed no conditions when they released the pictures under bond and had certainly imposed no conditions regarding newspaper publicity.... Got cracking and had Bav interviewed. Bav talked too much, as I knew he would.100

Superficially, Baverstock’s response to the newspaper was detached and administrative:

“The paintings were not secured for public exhibition. In any case we do not know how copyright might affect any photographs taken,” he said. When asked if the paintings had not, in fact, been on public exhibition at the Group Show, Mr Baverstock declined to reply. Was the notice making the request posted on the instruction of the council of the Society of Arts? [sic] he was asked. “I consulted the chairman (Mr A. E. Flower) and we agreed that the request should be made,” he said.... A customs official was informed that a notice under the paintings stated that they were under bond and no reference to them should be made in newspaper notices. He said the arrangement under which the paintings were released for inspection made no such condition.101

98 Letter, Brassington to Frankel. Undated, Frankel CAG 32.
99 Ibid.
100 Ibid.
Baverstock had not consulted Flower who later expressed his frustration that he was ‘fed up’ with his behaviour. Flower was not the only one to become exasperated with Baverstock, who continued to take every opportunity to frustrate the acquisition of any of Hodgkins’s paintings for public collections. Having secured the funds to purchase *The Pleasure Garden* in March 1949, Frankel wrote to Flower questioning why Baverstock had not responded to her request to make the painting available to her:

On the 17th March I replied to Mr. Baverstock’s letter of March 15th advising that I wished to purchase “The Pleasure Garden” by Frances Hodgkins, sufficient funds having been raised by public subscription. I regret to state that no reply has been received. I am therefore taking the liberty of approaching you, as President of the Society, with the request for an urgent reply…. I am astonished that in the circumstances the Society should not do all in its power to effect this sale as expeditiously as possible. From my point of view I am in the position of having collected this fund but being unable to put it to its appointed purpose, although the picture is in New Zealand and could have been made available within a day of closing the subscription.

Frankel’s urgency was driven by a belief that Baverstock secretly planned to return the painting to London before it could be presented to the acquisitions committee of the McDougall Gallery. In a letter drafted prior to her request to uplift the painting, she wrote to the representative of the British Council in New Zealand, Mr. Bostock, anxiously requesting assistance and confidentiality:

Since my return to Christchurch I have opened a fund to purchase one of the Frances Hodgkins pictures. In just over a week we have collected about £65 and are sure to get the 94gns necessary to buy “The Pleasure Garden.” I now would like to ask you whether we can pay this purchase money to you for transition to the British Council in London…. You will realise that in the circumstances that have arisen through the blunt refusal of the Canterbury Society of Arts to purchase one of these pictures I have no wish to have any dealings with the

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102 Letter, Brassington to Frankel, 7 November 1948, Frankel, CAG 32.
103 Letter, Frankel to Flower, 6 April 1949, Frankel, CAG 32.
Society in this matter. I suspect that its secretary may conceivably intend to return the pictures before the purchase can be effected, and I should therefore be greatly obliged if you could help me.\textsuperscript{104}

Baverstock’s response to Frankel’s request for the painting was evidently unhelpful, and revealed that although pleased to advance the arts in Canterbury according to his perceptions of works of merit, he could also hinder those artists whose work he did not value by invoking regulations. Frankel had objected to his request for freight costs being added to the purchase price.\textsuperscript{105} Baverstock replied:

The main object of our conversation in the Gallery was to explain some of the involved circumstances of the importation of the Frances Hodgkins pictures and the reasonableness of asking for a share of expenses. I thought that it had achieved its purpose and was surprised to receive your letter today. My previous letter was based on the declared policy of my Council that expenses should be shared…. Six were sent at tremendously increased cost and the reason for this is not understood. We have been careful to avoid mentioning this to the British Council.\textsuperscript{106}

Following the CSA’s decision not to purchase, the paintings were offered to galleries throughout New Zealand, and Baverstock sought to further limit their acquisition by recommending that caution was necessary due to the risk of damage in transportation. Brassington recognised the agenda that informed such advice. He wrote to Brasch, claiming that ‘The latest move of Baverstock and co. is to say it is not safe to send the pictures to Dunedin in case they are damaged in transit.’\textsuperscript{107} In addition, at the annual general meeting of the Society in 1948, Brassington, Frankel and Lonsdale, who had advocated the purchase of a Hodgkins painting, failed to be re-elected to the CSA council and Brassington privately maintained that Baverstock had played a significant role in their defeat:

1948 was the smallest [annual general meeting] for many years, as it was held on 21 December – and for the first time in human memory was advertised by the

\textsuperscript{104} Letter, Frankel to Bostock, 10 March 1949, Frankel, CAG 32.
\textsuperscript{105} Letter, Frankel to Baverstock, 17 March 1949, Frankel, CAG 32.
\textsuperscript{106} Letter, Frankel to Baverstock, 26 April 1949, Frankel, CAG 32.
\textsuperscript{107} Memo, Brassington to Brasch, 17 November 1948, MS-0996-002/043, Hocken Collections.
secretary as being for members only. In prior years, members were urged to bring spouses and friends – not so this year! There were only 57 out of a membership of about 550!

Baverstock, like Kelly and Nicoll, did not believe that the Hodgkins paintings were worthy of serious consideration. In 1949 in response to the artist’s brother, Percy Hodgkins, who had requested a survey exhibition of New Zealand art be held to clarify the merits and limitations of current arts practice to the public, Baverstock replied:

I am sure that many will sympathise with you in your desire to bring a healthy clarity to bear on the muddled thinking about Art for which self-deluded critics and shrewd dealers have to take a large share of the blame. The exhibition you suggest should help to put things in better perspective.

There is no evidence however, to suggest that such an exhibition took place. Baverstock was also to later confide to John Simpson, ‘Fanny can’t draw, you know.’ However, it would be wrong to believe that ‘The Pleasure Garden Incident’ had altered the hard-working Baverstock’s ideas about the arts, which encompassed a consistent vision of art and community, and of the capacity of art to improve and benefit society. Experimental and modern art was simply not included in this strategy and Baverstock’s opposition to it was to be seized on by his critics and indeed, seemed to bring out the worst aspects of his personality, as he worked to undermine its presence. It is highly likely that a collection of 301 modern British prints gifted by art collector and philanthropist, Rex Nan Kivell, to the McDougall Gallery in 1953 was not publicised and instead deliberately stored and forgotten through arrangements with the Canterbury Museum. It was only re-discovered in 1994.

The individual who challenged Hodgkins’s modernism was the same

108 Untitled document, Brassington to Brasch, MS-0996-402/043, Hocken Collections.
109 Baverstock, letter to P. D. Hodgkins, 24 June 1949, Brassington, CAG 32.
110 Interview, Simpson, 5 January 2006.
111 Peter Vangioni, Graphica Britannica. The Rex Nan Kivell Gift of British Modernist Prints, Christchurch: Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, 2005, pp.10-11. This theory for the misplacement of the prints is suggested by Neil Roberts and Vangioni. By 1953 Baverstock was overworked, continually wrapping or storing art works for exhibitions. The arrival of 300 unframed contemporary art works would have been an additional and unwelcome responsibility.

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personality who had written in the *Timaru Herald* of the dignity and beauty of art and its potential to enrich the quality of life. Baverstock remained convinced of the certainty of late nineteenth-century aesthetics and values and simply could not engage with European modernism, and its challenging and unrestrictive exploration of subjective ‘truths’ and values. This was evident in his treatise for The Group in 1929 and was still firmly upheld on his eventual retirement from the McDougall Gallery in 1969 when he commented to the *Christchurch Star*:

> I try to be open-minded.... But I'm opposed to the idea of a gallery filled with untested work. In that case the gallery ceases to be a public gallery in terms of public enjoyment... It should be remembered that not everybody is looking for abstracts.\(^{112}\)

To Baverstock, modern art seemed dark and pessimistic:

> Mr. Baverstock finds that representational work enjoys still the best sales from society exhibitions. Most people with money to spare for paintings find abstract work disturbing. Mr Baverstock’s main argument with modern painters is their “excessive morbidity”. Too often, he thinks, they concentrate on the gloomy aspect of the world and modern society. While this might be a reflection of their times, he would like to see a more positive note of happier optimism [sic].\(^{113}\)

More importantly, the debate that took place over *The Pleasure Garden* was symptomatic of a challenge, not so much to the Society’s authority, but to the broader influence of those perceived to be in control of the arts in Canterbury. Brassington described this as a struggle between Hodgkins’s supporters and those CSA council members who had been, or were, on the School of Art staff:

> I feel that the school of art gang are hostile to the B. C. [British Council] because their shows will educate the people towards better art, thereby exposing the weakness of the School!\(^{114}\)

\(^{112}\) *Christchurch Star*, 22 August 1969, p. 4.
\(^{113}\) *Christchurch Star*, 16 March 1960, p. 9.
\(^{114}\) Letter, Brassington to Frankel, 9 October 1948, Frankel, CAG 32.
Brassington believed that a painting by Hodgkins must be purchased or he would bring the Society to ruin:

I have moved the fight onto my own ground now – I have searched the title to the land and private acts which vested the land in the Society. I have prepared a good case for a general investigation of the whole show. I told Flower all this yesterday and he is rattled…. I have enough material to rock them at their annual meeting. They are all getting rattled, and I have great hopes they will capitulate on Thursday and buy. If not there will be lots of trouble for them!\(^{115}\)

Brassington’s confidence in such tactics may have been mischievous and disloyal, but he also remained perceptive about the wider issues that were being debated: ‘The real value of all this is that the F. H. [Frances Hodgkins] pictures are going to lead to a reform of the Art Society, etc – it is long term stuff, but it is worth it.’\(^{116}\)

Although Nicoll’s and Kelly’s authority was questioned and defeated by ‘The Pleasure Garden Incident,’ the association between the CSA and the School of Art remained intact, with a younger generation of Society council members and art school staff assuming their influence. Indeed, the support that the CSA council came to express for the presentation of *The Pleasure Garden* to the McDougall Gallery by 1951, anticipated its advocacy for contemporary New Zealand art from the mid-1950s onwards. Of greater significance to ‘The Pleasure Garden Incident’ than the challenge it represented to the Society and School of Art was the way in which it drew public attention to modernism as a serious and considered arts practice that retained relevance to New Zealand art and culture.\(^{117}\)

Nicoll’s and Kelly’s influence on the advisory committee to the McDougall Gallery may have been diminished by changes in its representatives, but Baverstock was still the CSA secretary, and he remained determined to frustrate and resist the advances of modern art. In March 1951 Sutton had questioned whether Baverstock supported

\(^{115}\) Brassington letter to Frankel, 7 November 1948, Frankel, CAG 32.

\(^{116}\) Brassington letter to Frankel, 14 November 1948, Frankel, CAG 32.

\(^{117}\) Feeney, pp. 110-111.
contemporary art, stressing the need for the CSA to take a lead in arts education. He referred to the poor public support for an exhibition of contemporary British art at the McDougall Gallery:

Mr Baverstock said: “Whatever lack of publicity there has been for the modern work has been lack of interest from the newspapers in wishing to deal with it, in spite of the fact that I have asked for a perfect balance to be preserved between the old and the new…. The answer is being given every day at the McDougall Gallery,” he said. “The general public is not interested in the British Council’s exhibition of contemporary art.” “The council of the society is falling down on its task, which is not to follow public taste but to lead it,” Mr Sutton said.118

If Baverstock was philosophically reluctant to provide an education programme to accompany the contemporary British art exhibition, this was also partly due to the additional duties he assumed from 1949 as the honorary curator of the McDougall Gallery. In 1947, the advisory committee for the McDougall Gallery had recommended that the City Council provide £400 per annum for the purchase of work for the collection.119 Since opening in 1932, the gallery had not received regular acquisitions grants, relying on donations or the CSA to purchase works, with the City Council providing only £311 towards the public gallery over the previous fifteen years.120 Pressured by the Society in 1948, the City Council agreed to an annual grant of £100,121 and, possibly to acknowledge that this placed additional responsibility on the CSA, appointed Baverstock as honorary curator of the McDougall Gallery.122 Consequently, from 1949 to 1959, he was responsible for the management of two important arts institutions and the obligations overwhelmed him.123 Baverstock doggedly maintained his work ethic on behalf of both institutions,124 shunning assistance and advice, and acting as a lone professional. His

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119 CSA minutes, 4 March 1948.
120 CSA Annual Report year ending 31 October 1947.
121 CSA minutes, 12 July 1948.
122 CSA Annual Report, Year Ending 31 October 1948.
123 This is confirmed in interviews with Simpson, 5 November 2006, and Coley and Quentin Macfarlane, 16 November 2005.
appointment to the McDougall Gallery coincided with the New Zealand Army’s vacation of the Durham Street Gallery.\textsuperscript{125} They left it in poor condition and Baverstock, undoubtedly besieged by his numerous duties, never managed to reinstate the gallery to a suitable condition. Artist and CSA council member, Quentin Macfarlane somewhat uncharitably recalls:

> When the army came in, they never re-fitted the gallery when they left. They removed elaborate gas candelabras that were in the ceiling. Baverstock never got on top of the refit required. He did very little. He saved bits of paper and wrapped them with string. His documentation of the collection was poor and there was a lot of material that was stored, and he never dealt with it. He was always far too busy unpacking and packing art works for sale and exhibition.\textsuperscript{126}

The maintenance of the gallery was a major challenge for Baverstock and the CSA council throughout the 1950s. The roof was regularly in need of repair, being in a state of deterioration in many places.\textsuperscript{127} Moreover, the gallery’s heating was inadequate and required a major review.\textsuperscript{128} While giving consideration to these repairs, Baverstock had received an assurance from the War Assets Realisation Board that the Society’s building would be completely restored by the army by 30 April 1949.\textsuperscript{129} However, restoration appears to have required more work than the army were prepared to undertake with the Society relining sections of its floors, and completing interior varnishing, as well as the repainting of external spouting. Additional upgrading was also required to the gallery walls with the replacement of hessian coverings in 1955.\textsuperscript{130}

This workload was further compounded as Baverstock attempted to deal with the increasing number of overseas touring exhibitions held at both galleries. At the CSA these included Italian reproductions and a loan exhibition of old master prints in 1950, contemporary British lithographs and UNESCO prints in 1953, a Henry Moore exhibition in 1956, a British Craft exhibition in 1957, and contemporary Australian

\textsuperscript{125} CSA minutes, 8 October 1948.
\textsuperscript{126} Interview, Coley and Macfarlane, 16 November 2005.
\textsuperscript{127} CSA minutes 25 February 1947.
\textsuperscript{128} CSA minutes, 12 July 1948.
\textsuperscript{129} CSA Annual Report for year ending 31 October 1948.
\textsuperscript{130} CSA minutes, 29 September 1955.
art and British watercolours in 1958, as well as centennial exhibitions in 1950 and a number of touring shows from the Auckland City Art Gallery. Baverstock was also pressured to provide more exhibitions for working artists. In 1949 Sutton had suggested that the Society hold more than one members’ exhibition annually and, although deferred due to centennial exhibition obligations in 1951,\(^{131}\) a spring exhibition was introduced in 1956 and a winter exhibition in 1957.\(^ {132}\) Suggestions were also made for one-man shows.\(^ {133}\)

All these additional demands took place in an environment characterised by gathering criticisms of the Society. By the late 1950s, dissatisfaction with the quality of work exhibited in the CSA’s annual exhibitions and complaints from artists themselves led to debate among the council regarding standards of work and the rights of members.\(^ {134}\) Much of this discussion was driven by a younger generation of artists emerging in the mid 1950s, a number of whom were resident at 22 Armagh Street in Christchurch.\(^ {135}\) This included John Coley and Macfarlane who both pressured Baverstock and the CSA to exhibit the work of young contemporaries. Their demands were evidence of a much broader neglect of the work of contemporary New Zealand artists’ work by public galleries.\(^ {136}\) Despite receiving little enthusiasm from Baverstock, Coley organised a successful exhibition of young New Zealand painters in the Durham Street gallery in February 1957. This included work by Coley, John Drawbridge, Patrick Hanly and Hamish Keith. (Plate 22) The Press review noted the somewhat self-conscious assurance of the artists, but it also recognised that it was not just an exhibition of work by a younger generation, but indicative of wider changes in society:

> A pamphlet issued by the organisers says that this is an important exhibition. An evaluation of its importance in their sense can only be made in the future, but the exhibition certainly serves to define a consciousness which has been growing for

\(^ {131}\) CSA minutes, 17 August 1949.

\(^ {132}\) CSA minutes, 13 May 1957.

\(^ {133}\) CSA minutes, 1 December 1952.

\(^ {134}\) CSA minutes, 27 February 1958.

\(^ {135}\) Roberts, p. 73.

\(^ {136}\) McCredie, pp. 14-15. McCredie’s discussion of public galleries in the 1970s notes the lack of contemporary art works in collections and that by the early 1970s, ‘there simply had not been any attention paid to an entire generation of mid-career artists by public galleries, and behind this backlog there were younger artists in turn who required attention.’ p. 15.
Plate No. 22. The Young New Zealand Artists Exhibition held at the CSA's Durham and Armagh Street gallery in February 1957.
Coley recalls that in the context of these developments, Baverstock was a figure of indifference and even amusement: ‘He was not admired or taken seriously. A respected, good and solid man, but he had a rather petulant attitude and was not over helpful.’ At the CSA’s annual general meeting in 1959 Macfarlane demanded greater opportunities for young artists to exhibit. He noted the Society’s neglect of his generation and criticised Baverstock’s management of the exhibition programme:

“The number of junior members has been slightly depleted and the trouble is that very little has been done to encourage them during the last few years. When I look around here everything seems to be musty and full of borer.” He moved that some encouragement be given to younger artists by the lowering of fees and by the granting of provisional membership so that they could exhibit in the Society’s spring and autumn shows.

Baverstock defended his support for younger artists, referring to his record:

The secretary (Mr W. S. Baverstock) said he had handled the work of many young artists from the School of Art and a big percentage had been accepted for the society’s autumn exhibitions. “That is surely encouraging them,” he added.

However, it was only following his resignation in 1959 from the CSA that advocates for change believed that this was really happening.

Equally indicative of the widely perceived need for change in the 1950s was the call by the retired lecturer in sculpture at the Canterbury School of Fine Art, Francis Shurrock, who had long maintained that the CSA failed to support sculpture in the way in which it profiled painting in its annual exhibitions. In 1957 he reiterated this belief, calling for the admission of craftsmen as artist members of the Society.

138 Interview, Coley 4 February 2005.
139 Press, 20 February 1959, p. 7.
140 Ibid.
Shurrock was requesting that the CSA acknowledge that art fulfilled a much broader role than that undertaken in the annual exhibitions in the Durham Street Gallery:

I think the Society of Arts could do a great deal to help the design section. It does not admit craftsmen as members,” he said. The admission of craftsmen as working members to the society would increase its membership and the interest created by their work would increase attendances at its exhibitions.142

The pre-eminence given to painting, and the manner in which it was valued by the CSA, was indicative of old-fashioned beliefs held by Society council members such as Nicoll and Colin Lovell-Smith.143 It also reveals the level of Baverstock’s commitment to the Society’s agenda and to the position taken by its council. Although his training in arts and crafts should have made him sympathetic towards Shurrock’s demands, Baverstock’s agenda was increasingly academic and conservative. In submitting a work for an annual exhibition, Macfarlane also recalls that Baverstock acted as representative of these values:

I went to the Durham Street Gallery with my painting, which was placed on an easel for consideration by the selection committee. It was then marked either “A” or “R”[accepted or rejected] with chalk on the back, and this sort of process is what kept the Society static. It was still maintaining and repeating Victorian practices, and they remained until he [Baverstock] left the CSA.144

By comparison, the support given to the arts by Eric Westbrook and later Peter Tomory, as directors of the Auckland City Art Gallery, made the CSA’s exhibitions indeed, those of all other galleries seem backward. In 1952 Westbrook claimed that cultural leadership for the arts resided at the Auckland gallery.145 Coley recalls that Westbrook and Tomory altered perceptions about the arts for his generation:

Westbrook and Tomory brought a level of professionalism to the arts. All of a sudden Baverstock looked old-fashioned. When openings took place at the CSA

142 Press, 1 November 1957, p. 3.
143 Interview, Coley and Macfarlane 16 November 2005.
144 Ibid.
they were covered by a woman at *The Press* who would describe the clothing and who was wearing what. Very little that was exciting was happening.¹⁴⁶

Coley described Baverstock as an administrator, lacking any vision for the arts, and instead entirely focussed upon hard work and duty:

> He grew up in a society where independence and hard work were valued.... He was friends with the rich people in town and a division existed between the ‘arty’ types... [and Baverstock]. He was friends with the women of Fendalton, and the artists were the rat-bags.... He was a control freak, and in trying to uphold the values he believed in, he ran the CSA down.¹⁴⁷

The battle that took place between Baverstock and Coley’s contemporaries in the late 1950s was most evident in the debate between the CSA and the *Press* art critic, Nelson Kenny, who brought a level of criticism to art reviews that had previously been absent in Christchurch. Kenny led the attack on Baverstock.¹⁴⁸ Coley maintains that there was no such thing as art criticism in Christchurch newspapers until Kenny began reviewing. Signing himself as J. N. K, he made no secret of his support for contemporary art. A review of an exhibition of 20th century French painting held at the public library in 1958 was described as ‘the most vital exhibition of painting shown in Christchurch for many years,’¹⁴⁹ and he identified a number of contemporary New Zealand artists at early stages in their careers for praise, singling out Milan Mrkusich as providing the ‘most satisfying painting’ of the eight New Zealand painters exhibition curated by Tomory and exhibited at the McDougall Gallery in 1958. Kenny compared his painting, *City Lights* to Mondrian’s *Broadway Boogie-Woogie*.¹⁵⁰ Equally, he was dismissive in his assessment of the CSA’s working members’ exhibitions and the lack of curatorial rigour that informed such shows. The 1958 spring exhibition was described as dull,¹⁵¹ and the autumn

¹⁴⁶ Interview, Coley, 4 February 2005.
¹⁴⁷ Interview, Coley and Macfarlane, 16 November 2005. Other than William Morris himself, the principles of the arts and crafts movement in late 1950s would have been a curiosity at best, and more commonly, despised by Coley’s generation. Consequently, Baverstock, would have valued the admiration of the women of Fendalton as consolation, just as he appreciated the respect of the Christchurch Savage Club.
¹⁵¹ *Press*, 16 September 1958, p. 3.
exhibition the following year 'cannot be said... [to be] particularly interesting. Nor, unfortunately, can it be said that there are any outstanding individual works.'

Kenny brought a youthful yet educated attitude to his reviews and this extended to assessing the manner in which the work had been curated and displayed. A touring exhibition of Israeli Art at the McDougall Gallery in 1959 was assessed as being poorly lit and difficult to pass judgement upon, unless improvement was made to its display. Kenny’s criticisms worried Baverstock, who placed pressure on the CSA council to respond. The president, Alan Reed, wrote to the Press on several occasions demanding that Kenny adopt a fairer assessment of the Society’s exhibitions. Reed maintained that Kenny’s opinions were biased towards the work of younger artists at the expense of senior figures:

J.N.K’s reviews are more suited to ‘Canta’ than the ‘Press’. He writes with the arrogance of youth, is prone to ignore some established artists and damn others with faint praise, then applaud the immature work of a student. In short, his taste is not sufficiently Catholic and he lacks judgement.... I feel that his reviews are doing harm to Canterbury artists and the Art Society.

However, the Press supported Kenny and he increasingly frustrated Baverstock through his public comments. In a letter to Evelyn Page in 1963, Baverstock expressed his annoyance:

No matter what I do... some way is found by “J.N.K” of “The Press” to continue his consistently bitter attacks. I am able to prove how unfair and absurd he is, but have not right of reply. If only his editor knew the truth he would begin to think seriously of the reputation of “The Press.” I have done no harm to J. N. Kenny and what his object is, I do not know – unless it is the sheer enjoyment of his malice. In more honest times he would have been horsewhipped.

152 Press, 13 April 1959, p. 7.
154 Interview, Simpson, 5 January 2006.
155 CSA minutes, 15 December 1958.
156 A. A. G. Reed to The Press, 27 November 1958, Baverstock Papers, MB 51, CSA Correspondence 1902–1970, 3b Box 2.
Baverstock’s most valuable contribution to the Society and the arts during the 1950s was his curation and administration of the centennial celebrations in Canterbury. The CSA organised two exhibitions at the request of the Canterbury Centennial Association to coincide with 100 years of the province’s settlement. The 1950 show consisted of work by living Canterbury artists, ‘who were born, trained, or who have lived in Canterbury for an appreciable period,’ and the final selection for exhibition was made by Baverstock and CSA councillors, including Clark, Fife, Sutton and William Trethewey. 119 artists were represented by 287 works. The list of artists confirms that the exhibition was intended to be inclusive, rather than highly selective. However, the research and co-ordination of the accompanying historical exhibition of Canterbury art in 1951 was primarily the work of Baverstock, and entirely to his credit. It featured paintings from numerous private and public collections and Baverstock thanked the 100 owners of works ‘who had gladly left gaps on their walls,’ in the Press. It also included work from the Canterbury Museum, Canterbury College, the Canterbury Law Society, Canterbury Pilgrims’ Association and the CSA, ranging from paintings by Nicholas Chevalier to Stoddart and Rhona Haszard, with a significant selection by Petrus van der Velden, Owen Merton and Raymond McIntyre. Complementing the catalogue, Baverstock provided additional notes on each artist to be hung with the exhibition as well as photographs where possible. Encompassing the work of 57 artists, Baverstock’s effort in assembling the exhibition was impressive, and his satisfaction and knowledge of Canterbury art are evident in comments he made to the Press.

The secretary of the society (Mr. W. S. Baverstock) and other officials of the society have been busy for months visiting owners of the paintings, and selecting and cataloguing the works. “It is a pleasure to be associated with this exhibition,” said Mr. Baverstock yesterday. “All the work involved has been

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158 *Press*, 5 September 1950, p. 3.
159 Ibid.
160 CSA minutes, 19 August 1950.
164 Ibid.
amply repaid by the pleasure we have got out of assembling these paintings and
the rediscovery of many of the interesting works done in past years.\(^{165}\)

Baverstock’s confidence in evaluating the merits of these historical works is clearly
apparent.

Margaret O. Stoddart (1865 – 1934), [‘was] described by Mr Baverstock as a
forerunner of Frances Hodgkins.... A painter whose water colours were always
prized by fellow-artists and whose work, since his death in 1916 has earned him
a wide repute was Alfred W. Walsh (1859 – 1916). “He would have been in the
top flight anywhere in the world,” said Mr. Baverstock.\(^{166}\)

The exhibition was the most comprehensive survey of Canterbury art of its kind
undertaken up to the 1950s. Unfortunately, the exhibition was poorly attended.
Baverstock blamed the poor weather and inability to heat the gallery adequately;
The coldest weather experienced for many years and the rationing of gas heat
when most needed, made conditions in the Gallery uncomfortable and marred the
material success of the Exhibition, which was held for the Museum Fund.
Visitors were delighted with the display, which revealed the full significance of
Canterbury as an art centre, but records show that, despite intensive publicity,
nothing could counter the bitter weather and the cutting-off of gallery heat.\(^{167}\)

The exhibition also tabled a loss of £6.1.1,\(^ {168}\) and although an offer was made to
finance a publication from the exhibition, it was declined due to concerns regarding
costs that the gallery might incur.\(^ {169}\)

In fact, throughout the 1950s exhibitions at the CSA were to record increasing
financial losses. A successful show of drawings and sculptures by Henry Moore
toured to the gallery in 1956, courtesy of the Auckland City Art Gallery. The Society
extended its opening hours,\(^ {170}\) recording attendances of more than 5,000, and equally

\(^{165}\) Press, 2 June 1951, p. 2.
\(^{166}\) Ibid.
\(^{167}\) CSA Annual report for year ending 30 September 1951.
\(^{168}\) CSA minutes, 11 September 1951.
\(^{169}\) CSA minutes, 7 November 1951.
\(^{170}\) CSA minutes, 25 October 1956.
impressive 1,630 catalogue sales, realising £81 in revenue. However, the fee for the exhibition meant that the Society incurred a loss of £46. In conjunction with debt from its annual exhibition, a total liability of £372 was sustained that year. Baverstock and the CSA faced the challenge of holding touring exhibitions without the capacity to generate the necessary revenue. Moreover, even though the sale of art works at the annual exhibition in 1956 had achieved a record, rising administration and associated costs also ate into profits. In 1958 Reed reviewed the financial year and noted financial losses from the autumn (£14), winter (£31) and spring (£100) exhibitions. Artist John Oakley pointed out that the CSA’s held greater responsibilities than other New Zealand art societies:

We should put it to the City Council that the public of Christchurch is taking the sponsorship by the Canterbury Society of Arts for granted... This was the only society to sponsor the Henry Moore exhibition; sponsorship of outside artists is not the primary function of an art society.... He did not think that it had occurred to the City Council that it had an obligation to the public to assist with the exhibitions.

An approach was made to the City Council for annual financial assistance. Reed maintained that:

In some other centres exhibitions which the society held have been staged by the local authorities and in Wellington, by the National Art Gallery. In Christchurch, the society has consistently sustained a loss on exhibitions. Approximately £200 has been lost over the last four exhibitions.

The CSA’s request was declined because the City Council was contemplating ‘fairly heavy expenditure during the current financial year for maintenance work at the Robert McDougall Art Gallery.’ The Society’s council sought to address financial losses by increasing membership and raising membership fees, with greater emphasis

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171 CSA minutes, 17 December 1956.
173 CSA minutes, 21 February 1957.
175 Ibid.
177 Press, 29 April 1958, p. 16.
being placed on younger members, concurrent with intentions to expand its exhibition programme. A more attractive basis for exhibition openings was also introduced with the notice for the annual spring exhibitions stating that dress would be informal. However, the problems of increasing costs and debt continued. In 1958 subscriptions were raised due to losses from touring exhibitions and the need to finance renovations to the gallery totalling £4,000. A further appeal for more members at the annual general meeting in 1959 from Macfarlane was met by the suggestion from Reed that an exhibition of artists under 35 years should be held, and it was evident that other council members shared these concerns. A sub-committee of Sutton, Olivia Spencer-Bower, Frank Gross and Stewart Minson was formed to examine the potential of holding a competition for younger artists and an invitation was made to Tomory to act as judge. Baverstock played no role in this suggestion and would have probably been hostile to it. By 1959 he shared little in common with the Society’s council. Kelly, Nicoll, and Wallwork had died, and a new generation presided. This included Doris Holland (Lusk), Paul Pascoe, Simpson, Spencer-Bower, Sutton, and Miles Warren.

With considerable relief to the new council members, on 7 November 1959, Baverstock resigned as secretary. This followed his appointment as director of the McDougall Gallery. Publicly, however, his commitment to the arts in Canterbury was celebrated and acknowledged with accompanying biographies that detailed his long-serving involvement with both the CSA and the McDougall Gallery. The Press paid tribute to Baverstock’s sixteen years of dedication to the Society. The Christchurch Star described him as ‘The man behind the art shows,’ and praised his humility and influence:

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179 CSA minutes, 14 June 1956.
180 CSA minutes, 14 August 1956.
181 CSA minutes, 20 February 1958.
182 CSA minutes, 19 February 1959.
183 CSA minutes, 15 June and 10 July 1959.
184 Interview, Simpson, 5 January 2006.
185 CSA minutes, 24 June 1952, 14 March 1953, 15 December 1954, and 22 August 1957 respectively.
186 Interview, Simpson, 5 January 2006.
187 CSA minutes, 7 November 1959.
188 Press, 13 November 1959, p. 15.
Plate No. 23. Students form the University of Canterbury School of Art setting up their annual exhibition at the CSA in November 1957. From left: Margaret Tyndall, Judy McIntosh, Quentin Marfarlane and Jon Elsom.
Behind almost all the art exhibitions, held in Christchurch over the past several years in the Art Society’s Armagh Street Gallery, or in the city’s McDougall Art Gallery, has been the work of Mr W. S. Baverstock. A quiet, retiring man, Mr Baverstock has determinedly avoided any sort of public prominence associated with the exhibitions he has handled. Even so, he has become known to a large section of the Christchurch community. People who have dealt with him at either of the galleries have found him infinitely conscientious and painstaking.\textsuperscript{189}

Immediately following his resignation, it was announced that the CSA gallery would hold continuous exhibitions throughout the year and solo shows by local artists:

After considerable discussion the holding of continuous exhibitions in the gallery on Durham Street already approved in principle was confirmed. It was resolved that a small gallery be set aside for the exhibition and sale of working members’ work, except when one man exhibitions were being held there – members to be allowed to hang a maximum of 2 pictures at any one time for a maximum of 2 weeks at a cost of 5/- per picture.\textsuperscript{190}

Kenny noted the significance of these changes, describing the CSA’s new professional responsibilities as similar to those of dealer galleries:

Its one-man shows and other exhibitions by small groups of artists will inevitably result in a change of emphasis in the society’s long-established annual exhibitions, for to a professional or semi-professional painter the former are much the more inviting.\textsuperscript{191}

He also referred to the absence of professional artists exhibiting with the Society at the time of Baverstock’s retirement:

At this year’s annual exhibition at the Durham street art gallery several of the better-known, more or less professional painters are not exhibiting, and others are thinly represented. Though this is probably due in part to the generally

\textsuperscript{189} Christchurch Star, 16 March 1960, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{190} CSA minutes, 16 February 1960.
\textsuperscript{191} Press, 13 April 1960, p. 14.
increased opportunities these painters have for exhibiting throughout the country nowadays.\textsuperscript{192}

The new life and direction of the Society was consolidated and extended by the appointment of André Brooke (1909 – 1988), as secretary. Brooke had recently opened the first dealer gallery in Christchurch in January 1959,\textsuperscript{193} closing it to assume the new position at the CSA in November.\textsuperscript{194} Within six months, 130 new members had joined the Society, including M.T. Woollaston, who had previously questioned the integrity of art societies.\textsuperscript{195} Brooke’s presence as secretary, following his representation of a number of leading and recognised New Zealand artists at Gallery 91, indicated to the art community that the CSA actively supported local contemporary art, acting as a dealer gallery, while maintaining its annual exhibition programme of working members’ shows. His role in the Society’s history is examined in the next chapter.

Throughout his time as director of the McDougall Gallery, Baverstock was embroiled in public debate with those in the art community who advocated the development of a local modern movement. Coley recalls that Baverstock was perceived to be little more than a mouth-piece for the uninformed views of the City Council, particularly those who were on the arts advisory committee and dismissive of contemporary work. Baverstock was recognised by the councillors as an authority on the arts and they would have relied on his advice:

Baverstock was no trouble to the city council which had a history of advisory committee members from the CSA resigning. Art was there for the councillors to ridicule. Before viewing work they would break and go to the Clarendon Hotel for drinks. They would return in a happy frame of mind and then take the opportunity to make fun of the art works…. a John Weeks painting was described as a rubbish bin painting. Sutton and Clark had had enough of it.\textsuperscript{196}

\textsuperscript{192} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{193} Roberts, Concise History, p. 74.
\textsuperscript{194} CSA minutes, 17 November 1959.
\textsuperscript{196} Interview, Coley, 4 February 2005.
As director of Christchurch’s public gallery Baverstock’s conservative policies and his failure to support the work of contemporary artists often drew comparison with Tomory and the Auckland City Art Gallery which actively nurtured modernism. However, such opinions failed to recognise the level of support provided by the Auckland City Council. As essentially a ‘one man band,’197 Baverstock’s and the CSA’s support from the Christchurch City Council was meagre. Only one Canterbury artist, Frank Gross, publicly drew attention to this disparity.

I don’t think it is possible for the gallery to have more exhibitions with the small staff employed. Most contributors have set up the Auckland Gallery as an example, but have not mentioned how many people are employed, nor how much money is spent in salaries and expenses, to produce the exhibitions arranged by them. May I suggest that the City Council should give more time, thought, and money to make the McDougall Art Gallery a gallery to be proud of?198

Gross’s opinion highlights the City Council’s failure to nurture the arts appropriately. Unfortunately, Baverstock remained a dutiful and uncritical employee, steadfast in his praise for the civic office’s support for the McDougall Gallery throughout his life.

Baverstock did not believe that the public gallery should maintain a significant role in the acquisition or exhibition of contemporary art. Towards the end of his long association with the McDougall Gallery, in a lecture to the Art Galleries and Museums Association of New Zealand in 1967, he drew a distinction between art societies and public galleries. An art society should support the exhibition and sale of practising artists’ work, while a public gallery’s concern was its permanent collection and touring exhibitions.199 By the later he meant historical touring shows, not contemporary travelling exhibitions such as those organised by the Auckland City Art Gallery. While these shows were appreciated, in his view the proper venue was the art society gallery. Baverstock maintained that much contemporary work was highly questionable.

May I, as one who has managed more than 100 exhibitions, comment that, in size of works and a proportionate lack of significant content, some recent touring shows seem to have reached the limits of absurdity. Apart from this, there is on tour a good deal of ephemeral work which should find no permanent place in public collections, but it serves at least to show what is going on in the world of art today.  

Baverstock made these comments in the context of a continually deteriorating relationship with the CSA. The Society was annoyed by Baverstock’s lack of interest in touring contemporary art exhibitions. A letter to the City Council in 1961 from the Society offered to assist with such shows, either at the CSA gallery or the McDougall. The CSA contacted Baverstock regularly to check if he had refused exhibitions that might be still available to the Society. Accordingly, in 1963 the CSA exhibited a retrospective exhibition of McCahon and Woollaston following Baverstock’s refusal to take the show from the Auckland City Art Gallery. At the annual general meeting in 1965, Macfarlane moved that the CSA should concern itself with exhibition standards and the collection policy of the public gallery. The CSA council unanimously supported Macfarlane’s motion. This led to calls for Baverstock’s resignation, but caution was expressed by the CSA president, G. C. C. Sandston, in taking such measures.

Mr. Sandston was requested to report on Mr Hall’s suggestion and Messrs Coley and Macfarlane agreed to confer and report on recommendations concerning the McDougall Gallery. In regards to this it was pointed out that any recommendation we make needed to be constructive and to be implemented if and when a new director is appointed since the City Council may be sensitive to criticism.  

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201 CSA minutes, 4 July 1961.
202 CSA minutes, 6 June 1963.
203 CSA minutes, 17 November 1965.
204 CSA minutes, 9 December 1965.
Relations between the two institutions deteriorated further in 1967. Baverstock declined to attend an opening at the CSA because he did not want to be subjected to criticisms of himself or the McDougall Gallery.

I feel most embarrassed and wish to avoid all contact with an ambitious and ill-informed coterie, apparently incapable of apology, and bound to be present. A few facts should be known to these interferers. The Robert McDougall Art Gallery is not the dead and ridiculous thing which the long campaign of misrepresentation and mischief, pursued within the Art Society at its most important meetings, seeks, with its excellent news value, to impress upon the public.\(^{205}\)

In July 1967 two works from a retrospective exhibition of Marcel Duchamp at the McDougall Gallery were withdrawn from display, *Fountain* and *Please Touch*. The move was made by the Chair for Parks and Reserves, councillor Peter Skellerup,\(^{206}\) undoubtedly on Baverstock’s recommendation.\(^{207}\) In a review of the exhibition in the *CSA News* magazine Skellerup’s decision was strongly criticised:

Surely it is extraordinary to find vested in the incumbent of the Parks and Recreation Committee chair the authority to interfere in things aesthetic, utterly regardless of his experience or background.\(^{208}\)

Baverstock indignantly responded that Skellerup had every right to make such a decision and stood firmly behind him, criticising those CSA members who continued to condemn the McDougall Gallery.

The only handicap I labour under is the ill-informed criticism, ruthlessly and meanly executed at Annual Meetings of the Canterbury Society of Arts. Meanly, because it is known that, as a Council Officer, my right of reply is restricted.

Again, it is my chairman, Cr. Peter Skellerup, who has, up to now, persuaded me not to resign my Honorary Life Membership of the Society. As for Marcel

\(^{205}\) Letter from Baverstock to S. E. Mair, President of the CSA, 11 June 1967, Baverstock working diaries, McMillan Brown Library.


\(^{207}\) Interview, Simpson, 5 January 2006.

\(^{208}\) *CSA News*, September 1967, No. 15, unpaginated.
Duchamp, perhaps a quotation from my monthly report to the Art Gallery Committee is relevant: “The most intense barrage of publicity ever provoked by an art exhibition in Christchurch failed to arouse more than moderate interest. Students (and some instructors) were more in tune with Duchamp’s absurdly manifested and laboured humour than many adults who wandered away to enjoy our own Collection.”

Baverstock took a further opportunity to praise Skellerup, following his retirement at a retrospective exhibition of his work at the CSA gallery in 1973. This was opened by Skellerup, and the artist responded perhaps a little too deferentially to the former city councillor:

Without wishing to embarrass Mr Skellerup, I would like to say that I have worked under seven committee chairmen, yet the greatest period of co-operation and friendship I had with the Christchurch City Council was while he was chairman of the parks, reserves, and art galleries committee.

Baverstock’s importance resides in his dominance in the arts in Canterbury for more than 25 years, encompassing his secretaryship of the CSA and position as director of the McDougall Gallery, and his maintenance of a subservient relationship between the public gallery and the City Council, that encouraged the latter to ignore or neglect the visual arts. In these roles he made a significant and two-fold contribution to the Society’s development. In the early years of his appointment, he extended the CSA’s influence in the wider community. He also increased the gallery’s revenue and membership, and re-defined its collection policy, as well as researching and documenting local exhibitions of significance to Canterbury’s art history. However, the controversy that erupted in 1948 over The Pleasure Garden impacted widely and permanently on Baverstock and the generation of CSA councillors that included Nicoll and Kelly. Baverstock’s response highlighted his limitations as secretary of an arts institution and he subsequently became increasingly embattled. He failed to respond to modern challenges and his resignation in 1959, in retrospect, provided the CSA with a welcome opportunity to address the concerns of many artists and renew its exhibition programme. To the frustration of his critics, following his resignation

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and appointment at the McDougall Gallery, he became stereotyped as the reactionary opponent of progress in the arts for another ten years. While he refused to exhibit a McCahon and Woollaston retrospective, the CSA enthusiasm for this and other exhibitions highlighting serious working artists, ensured that it acted for an emerging modernism where Baverstock failed.

It should, however, be noted, that Baverstock and his critics were both victims of City Council apathy and philistinism, being poorly supported throughout this period. Accordingly, when he retired from the McDougall Gallery in 1969, the tribute to Baverstock in the CSA News was tempered by generosity towards him. It acknowledged that, although unable to respond positively to the contemporary art world in which he found himself, there was something to admire in an individual who had selflessly devoted his life to the arts. Moreover, with the 76-year old Baverstock now no longer a force in the art world, generosity towards his often overlooked achievements was at last possible:

Mr. Baverstock's real contribution might never be measured, for at the McDougall he has been a one-man band, without staff or rich purchasing funds. He has worked long hours at the Gallery and at his home, sometimes in poor health, sometimes in the face of extreme difficulties. Loyally devoting these hours of unremitting labour to make the Gallery a real asset to the city. ... Very few cities can have been served by a man of such integrity and conscientiousness. In his retirement, we wish Mr. Baverstock well. 211


The duty of your council is to use this gallery to the best advantage, to show and promote the whole spectrum of art that is available to us from Hotere to Kelliher... from young student sculptors to Rodin.¹
(CSA President, Miles Warren, 1972).

When André Brooke was appointed CSA secretary in January 1960, the decision was warmly received by many artists and advocates of contemporary New Zealand art. ² (Plate 24) ‘There is a saying about “new brooms sweeping clean” so you should have plenty of scope where you are!’ wrote the artist Juliet Cowan to Brooke in February 1960.³ The Press art critic Nelson Kenny anticipated a transformation in the CSA’s programme and policies: ‘The Canterbury Society of Arts this year plans greatly to extend its activities.... Its enterprise is most welcome, for there is no purpose the society could better serve.’⁴ Brooke’s role in advancing perceptions about the CSA as a progressive institution has often been acknowledged and indeed, over the 43 months when he was secretary he inaugurated a distinctive and successful era for the Society.⁵ He scheduled more solo and group exhibitions, established a national contemporary art award and placed greater emphasis on supporting progressive New Zealand art. From 1960 until the mid-1970s, the Society impressively straddled the roles of a public gallery, a dealer gallery and a traditional art society. Its ambition and influence were nowhere more evident than in 1968 when its new, larger art gallery was opened at 66 Gloucester Street. CSA council member John Simpson recalled that ‘the new gallery was a huge achievement and its importance in stimulating exhibitions and other programmes can hardly be overstated.’⁶ Throughout this period, the Society’s exhibitions reflected a comprehensive appreciation of the arts and a commitment to painting, printmaking, sculpture, design, architecture, pottery, weaving and jewellery, both locally and nationally. Any consideration of the CSA’s pre-eminence in the arts

² CSA minutes, 29 January 1960.
Plate No. 24. André Brooke (c. 1960) was appointed CSA secretary in January 1960.
in New Zealand from 1960 until the mid-1970s must acknowledge and celebrate its pluralism. The period signalled the most flourishing activity in its history and the fulfilment of the Society’s intentions to ‘promote the study, practice and cultivation of the fine arts.’ It reveals, moreover, that the CSA’s sincere commitment to both amateur and professional artists within an expanding exhibition programme, and its advocacy of diverse aesthetics and arts practices, were fundamental to its authority.

Essential to Brooke’s management of the CSA was the esteem in which he held serious artists and their work. Potter Michael Trumic recalls that in those days ‘artists were not as important in New Zealand society as they were in Europe. [As a European immigrant] Brooke brought a respect to artists in Christchurch.’ 7 Brooke was urbane and sociable, and had an experience of modernism unfamiliar to the majority of his contemporaries in Christchurch. He was born in Budapest, studied art in Paris and, emulating Paul Gauguin, emigrated to the Pacific and New Zealand in 1944.8 Most significantly, in 1959 he established Gallery 91, the first dealer gallery in Christchurch. On a professional and cultural level it was unique in the city: ‘Over the eleven months of its operation regular lectures, poetry readings and workshops were held, as well as exhibitions.’9 CSA council member Quentin Macfarlane recalled that Brooke introduced a previously unknown degree of expertise to the arts:

Gallery 91... was the first large dealer gallery devoted entirely to promoting exhibitions of New Zealand contemporary art with commission on sales. The Gallery survived for a year but during this period, artists of the calibre of McCahon, Woollaston and Gopas to name a few, were seen for the first time in comprehensive solo exhibitions.10

Brooke closed the gallery in December 1959 to take up the appointment of CSA secretary, transferring Gallery 91’s membership of 250 subscribers and artists to the CSA. It was agreed by the Society and Brooke that Gallery 91’s membership:

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7 Interview, Michael Trumic, 12 July 2006.
9 Roberts, Concise History, p. 74.
10 Macfarlane, p. 54.
be taken over for [the] remainder of term then invited to join Society until then not to participate in Members’ exhibitions. Mr Bruck\textsuperscript{11} to consult [the] president re proposed circular to his members. It was resolved to allow payment proportionately reduced subscriptions for first broken year.\textsuperscript{12}

Brooke administered the CSA’s annual members’ exhibitions and when possible ran a concurrent programme of contemporary solo shows. He issued a notice to the artists he had previously represented, inviting them to participate in the CSA’s schedule:

As it has been announced I was invited to become the Secretary of the Canterbury Society of Arts and I have accepted with pleasure. It is my wish to continue with the permanent exhibition of the work of contemporary New Zealand artists and craftsmen in conjunction with the usual exhibitions arranged by the Canterbury Society of Arts. Therefore, it is with enthusiasm that I ask you to give your continued support to this most worthwhile work. The Canterbury Society of Arts will welcome you (if you are not already a member) to complete your Gallery 91 membership as a member of the Society of Arts. Then when your current membership expires you will be approached to renew your membership with the Arts Society.\textsuperscript{13}

The CSA promptly implemented Brooke’s policies. As in Gallery 91, a radiogram would play in the gallery during opening hours,\textsuperscript{14} to complement a programme of continuous exhibitions. At a Society council meeting in February 1960 it was resolved that:

a small gallery be set aside for the exhibition and sale of working members work, except when one man exhibitions were being held there – members to be allowed to hang a maximum of 2 pictures at any one time for a maximum of 2 weeks at a cost of 5/- per picture.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{11} Conversation with Michel Trumie and Quentin Macfarlane. Bruck was Jewish and changed the spelling of his name to Brooke in 1960.
\textsuperscript{12} CSA minutes, 17 November 1959.
\textsuperscript{13} Brooke to artist members, Gallery 91, undated, [1960] Brooke Gifford / Gallery 91, Barbara Brooke Papers.
\textsuperscript{14} CSA minutes, 17 November 1959 and Coley, ‘André Brooke,’ p. 4.
\textsuperscript{15} CSA minutes, 16 February 1960.
In March 1960 Brooke wrote to artist Helen Brown of the success of this partnership:

I have been allowed to do the things I want to do and the first continuous exhibition is already up in one gallery, whilst in the other I have a fine exhibition of reproductions of old masters. Everything has been handled very tactfully and a small room is available for the working members to exhibit in at all times to avoid hurting too many feelings. The smaller of the two large rooms is where I shall be able to have my continuous exhibitions at all times when the Society’s annual exhibitions etc, are not on. I shall be able to arrange selected one man shows and generally choose what I wish to hang.16

In an obituary written in 1988, former CSA council member John Coley recalled that Brooke’s appointment renewed the CSA:

As the Society’s manager for around eighteen months [sic] in the early sixties,17 Andre [sic] breathed new life into its attitudes and activities. The Society, then at its old Durham Street address, projected a fresh spring life mood under Andre’s enthusiastic guidance. A trim, cultivated and friendly man, with finely polished manners, Andre Brooke introduced a degree of European stylishness into Canterbury’s art community... He encouraged emerging artists to join the Society and presided over openings with dapper charm.18

A notable indication of these changes was Woollaston’s decision in 1960 to join as a working member.19 He had much earlier compared the success of exhibiting at an art society show to acting as a performing parrot, climbing up the netting of its cage.20

Though praised and supported by serious artists, it must be noted that Brooke expressed concern at the extent of his duties. Within three months of his appointment he wrote to the director of the Auckland City Art Gallery, Peter Tomory, informing

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16 Brooke to Helen Brown, 9 March 1960, Brooke Gifford / Gallery 91, Barbara Brooke Papers.
17 CSA minutes 28 June 1962, 4 July 1963, and 26 July 1963. Brooke was officially CSA secretary for 43 months which is longer than has been recognised. Roberts in Concise History, p. 74 claims that Brooke resigned in 1961. However, the CSA minutes record that Brooke took leave of absence in June 1962, handed in his resignation in July 1963, and officially left on 15 August that year.
18 Coley, p. 4.
19 CSA minutes, 25 May 1960.
him that ‘it appears I took over the Society job at the worst time and I have been overloaded with problems and routine work.’ Brooke was, however, fortunate in the encouragement that he received from the Society’s council. Simpson recalls that:

Members of the CSA Council, or at least an influential majority, certainly felt they had a responsibility to Christchurch and Canterbury to bring first-rate exhibitions and programmes to the people. The desire for improved performance existed before the appointment of André Brooke.

Prior to Brooke’s appointment, the CSA had already revealed a commitment to the development of contemporary art in Christchurch through hosting the 1956 Henry Moore show, establishing combined artists exhibitions in its programme, and publicly expressing concern over the McDougall Gallery’s conservative acquisitions policy. At the Society’s 80th annual general meeting in March 1960 its president, G. C. C. Sandston expressed his absolute confidence in its policies. He stated that the gallery had a ‘full programme and he hoped members would come and bring friends to see all the exhibitions arranged. He asked for support to justify the increased activities of the Society for the coming year.’ At least some credit for this must be given to Brooke himself, whose regard for the arts and artists was apparent to all and appreciated by serious artists. Indeed, Brooke’s contribution exceeded the Society’s expectations. Within four months of his appointment, he had proposed that the CSA’s permanent collection include the acquisition of international art works. Subsequently, a subcommittee was formed with Brooke, Frank Gross and Simpson recommending the purchase of European art. It also proposed that the CSA establish an acquisitions fund from sales’ commissions and subscriptions and that an advisory committee be formed.

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21 Brooke to Peter Tomory, 15 March 1960, Brooke Gifford / Gallery 91, Barbara Brooke Papers.
22 Interview, Simpson, 29 May 2006.
23 CSA 80th Annual General Meeting, 1 March 1960.
24 CSA minutes, 22 April 1960.
26 CSA minutes, 4 August 1960. There is no evidence to suggest that the Society actually purchased international art works, but the CSA’s response to Brooke’s suggestions confirms its support for his policies.
More importantly, Brooke also founded the country’s first and most controversial contemporary art award, the Hay’s Art Competition. Prior to his appointment Brooke had written to Hay’s Ltd, proposing an award be established and administered by Gallery 91 as an alternative to the popular Kelliher Art Competition for representational landscape painting. The new award would be sponsored by Hay’s and would ‘promote and develop contemporary art with three prizes: ‘Best Portrait and Figuration £500, Best Landscape £500, and Best Composition in Colour and Still Life £500.’ He suggested that the works selected as finalists should form a touring exhibition with the winning entry gifted to the McDougall Gallery. Brooke also proposed a knowledgeable, pro-modernist judging panel that included Charles Brasch and Tomory. He outlined the proposal to the CSA council and at its meeting in April 1960 Sandston disclosed his discussions with Hay’s Ltd:

He gave details of [the] meeting held and preliminary talks with Mr J. Hay. Mr H. Hay, Mr S. Mair, Mr C. S. Lovell Smith, Mr A. Brooke and Mr G. B. Sandston.... After detailed discussion the Council recommended that Sandston report to Hays Ltd on their desire over several details of the organisation and judging of the art competition to be held in association with the Canterbury Society of Arts.... Mr Sandston moved from the chair that a letter be written to Messrs Hays Ltd expressing appreciation felt by the art society of their great public effort and patronage of art.

In August 1960 the Hay’s Art Competition was held with great success, receiving more than 400 entries from throughout New Zealand and creating controversy when the three judges, Russell Clark, Simpson and Tomory divided the prize between three winners, Francis J. Johns, Colin McCahon, and Julian Royd. The decision to include McCahon’s abstract Painting, created immense public debate. However, greater argument ensued in 1961 when, of the three winning entries, the work was rejected by the Christchurch City Council for the collection of the McDougall Gallery. The

27 Macfarlane, p. 54. He maintains that Brooke was the ‘moving force behind this award.’
28 Hay’s Art Prize, Brooke Gifford Gallery/Gallery 91, Barbara Brooke Papers. Brooke acquired a copy of the conditions of entry of the Kelliher Art Competition and used it as a template, substituting his own specifications.
29 Ibid.
30 CSA minutes, 22 April 1960.
31 Roberts, p. 76.
32 Neither Johns’s or Royd’s paintings were offered to the McDougall Gallery’s collection.
CSA immediately assumed its authority on behalf of those who supported an emerging modernism. Alongside the School of Art, the Society withdrew its representatives from the gallery advisory committee and at the CSA council meeting in March 1961 Sandston moved that:

in view of the City Council’s announcement on the evening of Wednesday 15th March that the City Council would continue to be the final judge of all matters including artistic ones regarding the MacDougall [sic] Art Gallery and they obviously did not accept our public recommendation that pictures shall be mainly chosen by artists that we withdraw our representatives from the MacDougall Art Gallery Committee. The Art Society recommends with all the emphasis at its disposal that the City Council shall immediately appoint an independent board of trustees to administer the MacDougall Art Gallery with the Director, such trustees to be widely representative of the arts. The council instructs me to make a statement to the newspapers incorporating the above resolution and making a general statement that it considers it undesirable that politicians should judge pictures and formulate art gallery policy and that the position in Christchurch is virtually unique in the art world. While disapproving of the council’s previous actions we offer every help for the future development of the gallery and hope that immediate action will be taken.33

When the City Council further decided to retain its casting vote on the acceptance of art works for the public collection, Sandston publicly maintained that the Councillors were ill-informed in making such decisions:

The society considers the city council should move at once in the matter in the interests of the efficient administration of the gallery and to remove the unhappy spectacle of city councillors forced into the position of making pronouncements on art…. The net result of the council’s policy over many years is a city art gallery hopelessly unrepresentative of anything but nineteenth century art, and one which is incapable of giving school children, students of art and citizens any comprehension of most of the great art movements.34

34 Press, 21 March 1961, p. 16.
Sandston argued that the administration of the gallery should be altered and he recommended the formation of an independent board to oversee the McDougall.35

The CSA’s role in the establishment of the Hay’s Art Competition and the controversial rejection of McCahon’s Painting were indicative of its increasing confidence under Brooke’s leadership, and its standing in the arts was consolidated over the following decade. From June 1962 however, Brooke’s personal role in the management of the Society diminished. Following the Hays’ Art Competition he took leave of absence to develop his career as an artist and travelled to Paris,36 proposing that his secretary, Mrs Cowper, assume his administration duties and maintain regular contact with him.37 Brooke’s request was agreed to and in his absence the Society’s management remained efficient and progressive. At its monthly meeting in October 1962 Christchurch librarian and CSA councillor, Ron O’Reilly, proposed that the Society establish a stable of professional artists for one man shows.38 The following year O’Reilly liaised with McCahon to hold a supporting show of his work for sale to accompany a McCahon/ Woollaston retrospective from the Auckland City Art Gallery.39 Like Brooke, O’Reilly was an influential figure in the arts in Christchurch throughout the late 1950s and 1960s. He also established a loan collection at the public library and held exhibitions of contemporary art work, assisting the CSA to maintain its presence as a public voice for modern art. In addition to O’Reilly, other Society councillors also acted as public advocates for contemporary art. At the opening of a 1964 survey show of contemporary art, Macfarlane criticised galleries throughout the country for their lack of support for local painting.40 The CSA’s stance on such issues following Brooke’s departure corrects commonly held assumptions that the Society remained conservative in its policies and that the Society’s council had driven a frustrated Brooke to resign.41 In New Zealand Painting 1940-1960: Conformity and Dissension, Gordon Brown

35 Ibid.
36 Interview, Simpson, 5 January 2005
37 CSA minutes, 28 June 1962.
38 CSA minutes, 11 October 1962.
39 CSA minutes, 6 June 1963.
41 Roberts, p. 74. Roberts maintains that shortly after Brooke was appointed secretary he ‘hoped to continue his exhibition programme at the CSA’s Durham Street Gallery in conjunction with the Art Society shows. In fact, the alliance was shortlived: Brooke clashed with the more conservative members and resigned in 1961.’
maintained that an argument between the CSA and Brooke over the exhibition of Woollaston’s work led to the resignation:

At first arrangements went reasonably well to plan, but slowly too much emphasis was given to modern art at the expense of traditional painting. The crunch came when the Brookes were accused of favouring M.T. Woollaston with a second exhibition in May 1961. Disillusioned and soured by the venture, the Brookes withdrew.

Undoubtedly, Brooke would have been angered at the Society’s stand on Woollaston. However, to maintain that this single incident precipitated his resignation overlooks the confidence that the CSA council had in his leadership. Personal circumstances were of more importance. These included his decision to focus on his own art and the breakdown of his marriage.

Initially, Barbara Brooke was appointed temporary secretary, on the resignation of her estranged husband, in July 1963 and remained in the position until April 1966. Under her management, the number of continuous exhibitions grew with the artists’ sub-committee proposing in September 1963 that all working members should have the opportunity to exhibit in such shows. The Society continued to strike a balance between working members’ and professional artists’ exhibitions. In July 1964 CSA president Paul Pascoe noted the ‘great success this had been and moved that a vote of thanks be passed to all those concerned with the organising of combined one-man shows.’ In December 1963 a show of modern French sculpture, including work by Edgar Degas and Alexander Archipenko was held at the Durham Street gallery. It had been secured by the CSA as the McDougall Gallery had been unable to include it in its schedule. This international exhibition was followed by confirmation of a

42 Brown is referring to André Brooke and his wife Barbara who assisted him in his work at the CSA.
43 Gordon Brown, New Zealand Painting 1940-1960: Conformity and Dissension, Wellington: Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, pp. 52-53. Brown is also incorrect in stating that following this resignation, Barbara Brooke left as well. She was appointed acting secretary and remained in the position until her resignation on 26 April 1966 (CSA minutes 26 April 1966).
44 Simpson interview, 5 January 2005.
45 CSA minutes, 4 July 1963 and 26 April 1966.
46 CSA minutes, 5 September 1963.
47 CSA minutes, 8 July 1964.
49 CSA minutes, 3 September 1963.
survey of leading contemporary Italian sculpture in August 1965.\textsuperscript{50} (Plate 25) In addition, the Society put together group shows of local contemporary art, including ‘100 New Zealand Painters’ in 1965, curated by Society councillor John Oakley on behalf of the Pan-Pacific Festival at the McDougall Gallery.\textsuperscript{51} That year the CSA council also extended its influence by re-establishing its award medals for outstanding services to the arts. The medals had initially been given to artists for landscape, design, figure study and still life between 1888 and 1911, when the practice evidently fell out of use.\textsuperscript{52} When they were reintroduced in 1965, it was agreed to present the Society’s medals for ‘meritorious service to the arts.’ The inaugural presentation was made to New Zealand Newspapers Ltd for its ten years sponsorship of the secondary schools’ art exhibition.\textsuperscript{53} Later recipients included Sydney Thompson (1966), Tomory (1967) and E. H. McCormick (1968).\textsuperscript{54}

The Society also established the CSA Guthrey Travel Award, an annual grant for Canterbury artists that provided airfares and accommodation for artists to travel to Australia to extend their practice. The idea of a travel grant had been proposed in April 1965 with the suggestion that Air New Zealand or Qantas be approached as sponsors.\textsuperscript{55} However, in October 1965 the CSA was offered assistance from the local businessman and Mayor of Christchurch, A. R. Guthrey, who provided the return airfare to Australia.\textsuperscript{56} It was revealed at the annual general meeting in November 1965:

\begin{quote}
The President announced that in co-operation with Mr A. R. Guthrey, a Travel Award to enable an established or promising artist to visit and study in Australia would be established and the conditions of this award would be announced shortly. The Society, he said, was most grateful to Mr Guthrey without whose aid the award could not be made. It was valued at approximately £115, and would include the
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{50} CSA minutes, 12 August 1965.
\textsuperscript{51} CSA minutes, 21 December 1964.
\textsuperscript{53} CSA minutes, 5 March 1964.
\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Canterbury Society of Arts 1880-1980}, p. 38.
\textsuperscript{55} CSA minutes, 8 April 1965.
\textsuperscript{56} CSA minutes, 14 October 1965.
Plate No. 25. Contemporary Italian Sculpture Exhibition. Toured by the Auckland City Art Gallery and sponsored by the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, this exhibition was held at the Durham Street Gallery from 20 November-12 December 1965.
cost of a return air passage to Australia, donated by Mr Guthrey plus the cost of air travel within Australia, donated by the Canterbury Society of Arts.\(^{57}\)

The 1965 award was given to sculptor, Tom Taylor. Other recipients included Macfarlane (1967) and Doris Lusk (1970).\(^{58}\)

The Hay’s Art Competition, the revival of the Society’s medals and the CSA Guthrey Travel Award were innovative measures intended to advance the arts, and provided an admirable contrast with the McDougall Gallery’s reluctance to support local artists under Baverstock’s directorship. Inevitably, the CSA’s working members were increasingly critical of the public gallery. Although it was certainly questionable as to whether or not the Society had any authority to do so, in 1965, Macfarlane questioned the merit and value of the public gallery’s contribution to the arts at the Annual General Meeting and demanded affirmative action:

> Mr Quentin Macfarlane moved that the Council of the Canterbury Society of Arts concern itself with the general policy of the McDougall Art Gallery and the standard of presentation of exhibitions and the quality of forthcoming acquisitions to the Collection…. Mr John Coley approving the motion, mentioned that during his visit to the U.S.A. he had seen galleries in smaller cities providing a more interesting selection of programmes and exhibitions and suggested that a programme for a city art gallery should be vital and a pleasure to view.\(^{59}\)

Macfarlane’s proposal however, was tempered by a later recommendation that the CSA ensure that comments were ‘constructive and be implemented if and when a new Director is appointed since the City Council may be sensitive to criticism.’\(^{60}\) The authoritative lead taken by the CSA in offering advice to the public gallery was further evident in March the following year. The Society congratulated the McDougall Gallery for acquiring a contemporary Italian sculpture from the 1965

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\(^{57}\) CSA minutes, AGM, 17 November 1965.
\(^{58}\) *Canterbury Society of Arts 1880-1980*, p. 38.
\(^{59}\) CSA minutes, AGM, 17 November 1965.
\(^{60}\) CSA minutes, 9 December 1965.
touring show at the Durham Street gallery, *The Bather* by Marcello Mascherini and urged similar purchases.  

This predominance of the CSA in the arts contrasts with the diminishing level of influence enjoyed by other art societies in the main centres. In 1956, following Tomory’s arrival as director of the Auckland City Art Gallery, the Auckland Society of Arts (ASA) lost the use of the public gallery as a venue for its annual working members’ exhibition on the premise that the exhibition space was required for the display of the Henry Moore touring exhibition, a temporary measure but one which became permanent. In addition, although Professor Paul Beadle, Dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Auckland had become ASA president in 1962, and had demanded an exhibition programme that was ‘more in keeping with contemporary needs and ideas,’ the ASA council rejected this. It maintained that modernism was a valid form of artistic expression, but should not be allowed to dominate the exhibition programme. It would be wrong to believe that the ASA remained unresponsive to an emerging modern movement. Like the CSA, the Auckland Society expanded its programme and made a growing commitment to contemporary art. Following its exclusion from the public gallery in 1956, the ASA acquired and renovated the Rossville Private Hotel for its exhibitions. In addition to solo shows by artists such as R. N. Field and Eric Lee-Johnson, and group exhibitions that included a 1968 survey of New Zealand Women Painters from 1845 to 1968, and the Manawatu Contemporary Art Competition exhibition and the New Zealand Pottery and Weaving exhibition of 1967, the Society’s programme of contemporary art was complemented by classes tutored by the modernist Louise Henderson. The ASA’s decision in 1962 to support the work of amateur and professional artists reflected the fact that the Auckland Society’s role, like the CSA’s, was broad-based. However, while Tomory’s modernist agenda prevailed at the Auckland City Art Gallery, Christchurch lacked such an authoritative publicly-funded voice for the arts. In its absence, and with W. S. Baverstock’s continued hold at the McDougall Gallery,
the CSA captured the initiative, indeed, more actively supporting contemporary and professional art than the ASA ever did.

In Wellington, the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts (NZAFA) also expanded its programme to include touring shows such as the National Bank of New Zealand Art Award and the Benson and Hedges Art Award. Moreover, in the late 1950s Academy council members Peter McIntyre and Mervyn Taylor demanded the inclusion of craft, pottery, sculpture and graphic art in its annual exhibitions. By the mid-1960s its programme included exhibitions by Patrick Hanly and Ralph Hotere, and in the 1970s work by sculptors, print-makers, photographers, and a wide range of craftspeople, alongside touring exhibitions from the Auckland City Art Gallery and the Govett Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth. The Academy also held an exhibitions by Fritz Hundertwasser in 1973 and etchings by Pablo Picasso in 1975. However, while valid comparisons can be made between the CSA’s and the NZAFA’s programmes, the Academy’s loyalties were divided between the neighbouring National Gallery and its own exhibitions. In contrast, the CSA frequently challenged the McDougall Gallery’s policies because it was widely perceived that it had failed to take on the full responsibilities of a public art gallery.

Criticisms of the McDougall Gallery’s collection and exhibition programme by the CSA council diminished, however, as the Society became preoccupied with the building of a new gallery at 66 Gloucester Street. It was as if the CSA resolved or countered the limitations of the McDougall Gallery’s policies by constructing a rival public gallery of its own. The discussion at the Annual General Meeting in 1966 indicates an identity of interests between the proposed building and the public gallery’s programme. It was proposed that progress on the Society’s Gloucester Street gallery should not proceed until the role of the McDougall Gallery was resolved:

67 Kay and Eden, p. 157.
68 Kay and Eden, pp. 157-158
Mr R. Quince asked what steps had been taken by the Council in respect to the resolution carried at the Annual General Meeting in 1965, regarding the McDougall Gallery. In reply the chairman said that the Council had discussed the matter but had decided to take no action, first because the Council was busily engaged in the Society's affairs and secondly because it was felt that the time was not opportune. Mr Quince moved and Mr Taylor seconded:— "This Society is unwise to spend money on its own gallery before the future of the McDougall Gallery is determined." Mr Paul Pascoe, Mr Sutton, Mr A R Mackay and a number of other members spoke strongly in opposition to the motion. The motion being put to the meeting appeared to be lost but the chairman said he must have a clear expression of members' views and would therefore put the motion to the meeting again. On doing so the motion was lost, overwhelmingly on the voices.70

Although the Gloucester Street gallery represented the realisation of the CSA’s aspirations for the arts, it was also the result of the more mundane reality of the limitations of its Durham Street gallery and periodic requests by the Department of Justice to reclaim the land on which the Society had built in 1890.71 The restricted land title presented to the CSA in 1889 had stipulated that any potential purchaser must be a government department.72 The Society had earlier agreed - in 1937 - to vacate the site when the Minister of Defence, the Hon. H. G. Mason, requested the land for the Supreme Court.73 At that time, the CSA council prepared to vacate and had plans drawn up for a new gallery at 82 Gloucester Street by architect Heathcote Helmore on land that the government offered in compensation.74 However, the outbreak of the Second World War halted progress.75 The army’s occupation of the Durham Street gallery meant that priority given to building a new art gallery was delayed, but the matter did not go away. In March 1953 Baverstock met with the Ministry of Works architect, James McDougall, who discussed the ‘possible surrender

70 CSA minutes, AGM, 17 November 1966.
71 Interview, Miles Warren, 14 July 2006. Warren is adamant that the decision by the Department of Justice to seek return of ownership of the Durham Street site crucially influenced the move to 66 Gloucester Street.
72 CSA minutes, 26 July 1963.
73 CSA minutes, 27 July 1937.
74 CSA minutes 19 July and 20 September 1938.
75 CSA minutes, 30 May 1939.
of Gallery and land,' and proposed 66 Gloucester Street as a suitable alternative. This meeting was followed by an approach in June 1959 from the government architect, Fergus Sheppard who provided Baverstock with documentation referring to the use of the site for the law courts. Throughout the 1950s the Society's council had been required to upgrade the building while seeking to accommodate more exhibitions and address the lack of storage space. In August 1960 the government again requested that the CSA give up the site. It recommended that the Society build on Gloucester Street, prompting the CSA council to seriously consider their options, including the opportunity to rebuild in an appropriately central location.

In March 1963 the Society elected a subcommittee to oversee the location, design and building of the new gallery. The Ways and Means committee consisted of local businessman Stewart Mair (1900-1969), architect Stewart Minson and Sandston. From the moment of its establishment, Mair assumed a predominant role. As chairman of Hay's-Wright Stephenson Ltd, a director of the Canterbury Frozen Meat Company and retired president of the Canterbury Chamber of Commerce, he possessed a background that raised the Society's profile in the community. Indicative of his authority was his election as CSA president in 1964, immediately following his meeting with the Prime Minister, Keith Holyoake, when Mair announced that the government had approved a £20,000 grant towards the new gallery. He remained president until his death in December 1969. The CSA's treasurer from 1964 to 1974, Malcom Ott, recalled that Mair's dynamic leadership was a catalyst for further change:

Mair became president and realised things had to happen. [The CSA had] never had a president with the drive of Mair. He was a new experience for the council and he wanted things to happen and decisions had to be made to wake the place up.... Mair gave the [CSA] a more business-like and strategic approach. He was

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76 Baverstock diaries, 6 March 1953, Baverstock Papers, MacMillan Brown Library.
77 Baverstock diaries, 3 June 1959, Baverstock Papers, MacMillan Brown Library.
78 CSA minutes, 13 October 1958.
79 CSA minutes, 4 August 1960.
80 CSA minutes, 20 November 1962.
81 CSA minutes, 7 March 1963.
82 CSA minutes, 8 October, 11 and 26 November 1964.
not close to the working members, but he was the man for the times. The [new] gallery would not have happened without him.\textsuperscript{84}

Although he was a keen supporter of the Society and the arts, Mair’s business-like approach did not find favour with Barbara Brooke or all the Society’s council and artist members.\textsuperscript{85} However, his skills as an entrepreneur were critical to resolving the pressing demands on the CSA to raise funds for a new gallery. In 1963 the Society owned a deteriorating and ageing building on a site acquired from the government on condition that it was used as an art gallery and any sale of the land was restricted. Moreover, the CSA had few assets apart from its permanent collection which in the early 1960s was of limited value. Mair was in a poor position to secure the necessary loan. However, drawing upon the support of the local business and political community in July 1963 he applied to the Department of Internal Affairs for a grant. At this stage, somewhat curiously, Mair believed that the CSA should retain its gallery on the Durham Street site by rebuilding on a section of the land or constructing a new gallery on the top floor of the new law courts, rather than moving to Gloucester Street, which he maintained was too far from the city centre.\textsuperscript{86} Mair’s application to the Department included the support of politicians from both main parties and the Christchurch business community:

Members of Parliament, ‘The Hon’s H.R. Lake, J. K. McAlpine, R.G. Gerard, R.M. Macfarlane, Mabel Howard, J. Matheson and Messrs Walker, Connelly, Kirk and Pickering. We are also permitted to say that the Mayor of Christchurch, Mr George Manning, the Faculty of Fine Arts of Canterbury University, the editor of The Star (Mr George Burns), the Director of the Adult Education Department of Canterbury University, the Chamber of Commerce, have also given their approval.\textsuperscript{87}

In addition, a delegation of Christchurch Members of Parliament met in September with the Minister of Internal Affairs, Sir Leon Goetz, supporting Mair’s application

\textsuperscript{84} Interview, Malcolm Ott, 30 June 2006.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{86} CSA minutes, 2 May 1963.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.
and giving him a letter from the City Council endorsing the Society’s request. However, if the application was to succeed, Mair knew that the CSA needed to demonstrate community support for the project. At the Annual General Meeting in November 1963 he put forward the motion that membership fees be increased to three guineas and that £1 of each subscription was designated towards the building fund. He called upon the Society’s membership to support the new gallery, reminding them of its history and long-standing advocacy for the arts. He emphasised that their generosity would be reciprocated by central government:

The pioneers of Canterbury founded this Society in difficult times, we are still pioneers in the 1963 sense, and have great responsibilities and great opportunities. We have support from all the Canterbury Members of Parliament, irrespective of political party, and if we are to expect any degree of consideration for a grant from the Art Union... we must help ourselves more. We cannot do so on our present subscription. [We] are keeping alive in our midst the tradition of a liberal Art Society. A tradition to receive, a tradition to look after and a tradition to hand on.

The motion was carried and in November 1964 he announced to the CSA council that a grant of £20,000 had been approved. The declaration was welcomed by the Press in an editorial that expressed relief that the decision broke the stalemate given many CSA council members’ desire to retain Durham Street. The Society could now look elsewhere for a site with a significant proportion of the funds secured:

The people of Christchurch are indebted to the Minister of Internal Affairs (Mr Seath) for breaking the deadlock on the siting of the new art gallery and the use of the old art gallery site for the new law courts. The transfers have been contemplated for a long time, but the Canterbury Society of Arts was not prepared to leave its present gallery, unsuitable though it is, until it had some assurance of finance for a new one in Gloucester Street.... The grant will enable

88 CSA minutes, 5 September 1963.  
89 CSA minutes, 26 November 1963.  
90 Ibid.  
91 CSA minutes, 11 November 1964.
the society to plan a modern gallery in which appreciation of the visual arts, and training in them, can be fostered.\textsuperscript{92}

How much revenue was required to relocate? At a meeting in March 1965 the Society’s council established that they needed £65,000. This was made up of £23,000 secured from the government for the sale of the Durham Street gallery, the £20,000 grant from the Department of Internal Affairs, £2,000 from funds raised locally, and a loan of £20,000 which had yet to be secured.\textsuperscript{93} It was a measure of Mair’s success that he had brought the Society so close to obtaining the full amount.

Confident that the Society had adequate funds to proceed, Minson, Henning-Hanson and Dines were confirmed as the architects of the new gallery. (Plate 26) Stewart Minson was a long-serving council member and hoped to submit competing designs against the ambitious, younger architects, Miles Warren and Peter Beaven. Minson was insistent that the commission was his. Ott recalled that Warren and Beaven politely assented to his appointment:

Minson was the oldest of the three and he stood his ground and claimed that he should be the architect. The others were young and Christchurch was only starting to be rebuilt. There was not a lot of confidence in Minson. He had done homes but few commercial buildings. However, he got the job.\textsuperscript{94}

Debate then took place over the gallery’s location. Although Gloucester Street was the most economical choice, the narrowness of the site made it not altogether suitable. It was smaller than the Durham Street site, being 1981 square metres compared to 2621.\textsuperscript{95} If the CSA was built on Gloucester Street, then its gallery would need to consist of at least two stories. The Society’s council assembled a list of potential sites and in March 1965 proceeded to select the most suitable location:

2. Montreal Street.

\textsuperscript{92} Press, 20 November 1964, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{93} Memo, possible sites and buildings, CSA minutes, 11 March 1965.
\textsuperscript{94} Interview, Ott, 30 June 2006.
\textsuperscript{95} CSA minutes, 11 March 1965.
3. Gloucester Street.
4. McDougall Property, Papanui Road.
5. Cranmer Lodge.
6. Corner Montreal Street and Cashel Street.

Site No. 1 is said to be the best aesthetically, but it is Crown land and obstacles must be overcome.... Site No. 2. Montreal Street. The size is sufficient and frontage good.... Site No. 3. Gloucester Street. The area is sufficient and location is good. The frontage is narrow and buildings to be erected on adjoining land could be a detriment to any building erected by the Society...
The cost, £8,600 is probably well below the commercial value. We would have a clear title to this site.... Site No. 4. McDougall Property. [Papanui Road] This is the largest area and will therefore permit more development now – or in the future – than site 1, 2, or 3. The house is brick, 18 years old and in excellent condition and good taste.... Site no. 5. Cranmer Lodge. This is in Chester Street West, about 200 yards from our present gallery.... Site No. 6. Corner Montreal and Cashel Sts. This site is close to site No 2. It is on the North-West corner, not far from the Bridge of Remembrance....

There was considerable support from the CSA council for the Provincial Council site and also from a Press editorial in May 1965:

The Canterbury Society of Arts should not lightly dismiss what appears to be a promising opportunity of using its resources both to obtain a new gallery and to lead the way in restoring and preserving the Provincial Council buildings.... The Society must consider how best to use its assets before it relinquishes its Durham street gallery; if it can use them, without detriment to its own prime interests, in such a way as to secure the future of the Provincial Council buildings, it will serve the interests both of art and of the public.

The newspaper argued that the rise in commercial buildings in the inner city meant that there was a lack of recreational spaces. The Provincial Buildings was also a

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96 Ibid.
97 Ibid.
favoured choice because it provided good reason for the preservation of Mountfort’s historical building. In May 1965 Oakley proposed and Beaven seconded:

That this Council reaffirms its earlier decision “that the provincial Chambers area is the best site for the new art gallery if available on terms acceptable to the Society and that this council make a united enéavour for a period not exceeding three months to achieve this object.”

Warren drew up plans for the renovation of the buildings and alongside Beaven and Mair planned to meet with the Minister of Lands to argue the CSA’s case in Wellington. Due to poor weather only Beaven reached the capital, and in spite of the best intentions, in July the Ministry of Lands advised that the Provincial Council buildings would not be available for use as an art gallery. It was immediately proposed that of the remaining sites, the Gloucester Street location should be purchased. The CSA council proceeded to list sixteen recommendations for the new gallery and in discussion with Minson, plans were developed. Paramount consideration was given to wall space for hanging art works, the capacity for the gallery to be built to six stories, natural lighting to be exploited to the full, space for one-man shows and a permanent selling gallery area, council rooms shared as club rooms or a library for members, a lecture room, a kitchen to cater for up to 600 people, and suitable storage for art works. Although keen to fulfil all these proposals, when the preliminary plans were presented in November 1965 the estimated £78,000 was a prohibitive figure, excluding the provision of a lift, floor coverings and heating. Pascoe therefore put forward the motion that:

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99 Christchurch Star, 21 November 1966, p. 2. The newspaper emphasised the need for the preservation of historical buildings in the inner city.
100 CSA minutes, 21 May 1965.
101 Ibid.
102 CSA minutes, 10 July 1965.
103 CSA minutes, 8 July 1965.
104 Ibid. The vote to acquire the Gloucester Street site was carried by seven votes to two. Oakley and Fleming opposed the motion. Fleming considered that the new CSA gallery would be better located away from the central city in Papanui, in a residential area. Fleming’s preference is in contrast to Mair’s greater ambitiousness for a new gallery. He persuaded the CSA that it was entering a new era of expansion and the vote confirmed this.
105 CSA minutes, 9 September 1965.
we instruct the Architects on the amenities not required at the moment so that provision could be made for them in the future, if it were possible to extend the building... the whole to cost not more than £55,000.106

Minson complied and at the Annual General Meeting that year presented plans for the new building.107

As the drawings for the gallery reached completion, Mair faced a further challenge when the government held back the permit, maintaining that the building industry was “over-committed.” and the gallery should not proceed.108 Mair flew to Wellington to argue his case and returned to announce that the Society had been given a provisional building license.109 His success vindicated his authority as CSA president and assisted by Ott and Russell [Rusty] Laidlaw (1896-1981), who had been appointed acting secretary following the resignation of Barbara Brooke in April earlier that year,110 the Society focussed on securing the remaining funds.111 £25,000 was still required. In the March 1968 CSA News, Coley recalled:

we had, after paying for the Gloucester Street site, cash in hand of nearly £40,000. It would be necessary to borrow and money was “tight.” The mini-recession had begun. Wool prices were falling. First one and then another potential lender of the money we required offered his excuses.112

From January 1967 the CSA approached every bank in Christchurch,113 securing the necessary sum in March from the Canterbury Savings Bank.114 On 9 May the contractors began work on the new building at 65 Gloucester Street.115

The appointment of Laidlaw as secretary at this time was well-received and he remained in the position until 1975. (Plate 27) Laidlaw was a retired farmer from

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106 CSA minutes, 11 November 1965.
107 CSA minutes, AGM, 17 November 1965.
109 CSA minutes, AGM, 17 November 1966.
110 CSA minutes, 26 April 1966.
111 Interview, Ott, 30 June 2006.
112 John Coley, 'How the New Gallery was Achieved,' CSA News, No. 18, March 1968, p. 4.
113 CSA minutes, 16 January 1967.
114 CSA minutes, 9 March 1967.
115 CSA minutes, 11 May 1967.
Kaikoura who had moved to Christchurch in the late 1950s with his wife, Joyce, who was a devotee of music and art. He attributed his commitment to the arts to his time in the New Zealand countryside where he ‘felt the sculptured forms of rock and developed a feeling for colour and form.’  He had taken art classes in Kaikoura, tutored by potter and art educator, Yvonne Rust, whose reputation resided in her ability to inspire a profound commitment to the arts from her students. Laidlaw was no exception, perceiving the arts to be an almost mystical calling. Painting, especially, was a way to reveal the mysterious and transient qualities of the natural environment. This seems particularly appropriate for one who claimed he had experienced ‘the spectre of the Brocken,’ a phenomenon in which the shadow of an individual in fog is outlined by a rainbow-coloured halo. Laidlaw earnestly sought to convey this ethereal quality in his own painting. He exhibited in an ‘open’ group exhibition at Gallery 91 in 1959 and became a CSA working member in March 1960, following Brooke’s appointment as secretary. He possessed an enthusiasm for all aspects of the arts and worked as a volunteer for the Society, improving the storage of the permanent collection and was appointed membership secretary in December 1963. He regularly attended the Society’s council meetings and reported on membership and resignations. By March 1964 he had recruited 50 new members, raising membership to 840. Laidlaw had the capacity to interact warmly with numerous groups and communities and he encouraged students and local businessmen to join the CSA. Ott recalled that Laidlaw socialised at the Christchurch Club and, at the same time, was well-liked by young artists exhibiting at the gallery. In November 1964 he was appointed building administrator for the new gallery, and by February 1965 he was working with Barbara Brooke on the

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118 'Rusty Laidlaw Resigns.' p. 8.
120 CSA minutes, 10 March 1960.
121 CSA minutes, 10 March 1963.
122 CSA minutes, 5 December 1963.
123 CSA minutes, 13 February 1964.
124 CSA minutes, 5 March 1964.
125 CSA minutes, 5 March and 8 July 1964.
126 Interview, Ott, 30 June 2006.
127 CSA minutes, 30 November 1964.
gallery’s exhibition programme.\textsuperscript{128} When she resigned in April the following year, he was the obvious choice to succeed her.

The new gallery was opened by the Governor-General, Sir Arthur Porritt, on 8 March 1968.\textsuperscript{129} (Plates 28 and 29) The Society held a ballot among its membership for admission, anticipating that demand would be well beyond the available seating.\textsuperscript{130} The guests attending the opening included, George Manning, the Mayor of Christchurch, the Hon. A. E. Kinsella, the Minister of Education, and Norman Kirk, Leader of the Opposition. The opening coincided with the Pan-Pacific Arts Festival and the CSA had secured suitably prestigious exhibitions, notably \textit{Rodin}, a touring exhibition of 26 sculptures and 8 drawings by the French sculptor and his contemporaries.\textsuperscript{131} In the downstairs gallery was an exhibition of Sidney Nolan’s paintings, \textit{Riverbend} and \textit{Ned Kelly} (Australian National University, Canberra), secured by Mair with the support of the Auckland City Art Gallery and the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council.\textsuperscript{132} (Plate 30) Other exhibitions encompassed pottery by leading British ceramicist Michael Cardew, a New Zealand pottery exhibition,\textsuperscript{133} an international photographic exhibition, and jewellery by Kobi Bossard and Gunther Tammelar.\textsuperscript{134}

The status and quality of the opening exhibitions were a tribute to Mair’s vision and ambition for the Society. Nowhere is this more evident than in the negotiations that he undertook with the then director of the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, David Peters, and the director of the Auckland City Art Gallery, Gil Docking, to secure the Nolan exhibition. In July 1966 Mair had written to Peters, with a personal introduction; ‘Dear David, I feel I may address you in this way – after all you know my sister well,’ before informing him that Qantas had agreed to fly the Nolan panels for ‘Riverbend’ to Christchurch to coincide with the opening of the Gloucester Street gallery. Mair went on to suggest that ‘it would be a great pity if these very fine

\textsuperscript{128} CSA minutes, 4 February 1965.
\textsuperscript{129} CSA minutes, 18 January 1968.
\textsuperscript{130} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{132} CSA minutes, 8 February 1968.
\textsuperscript{133} CSA News, No. 16, November 1967, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{134} Dorothy Braxton, ‘New Showcase for Christchurch Art,’ \textit{New Zealand Woman’s Weekly}, Undated, CSA News scrapbook, Christchurch Art Gallery Library.
Plate No. 28. Minson, Henning-Hanson and Dines: The CSA gallery at 66 Gloucester Street. This photographed was taken shortly after its opening by the Governor General, Sir Arthur Porritt, 8 March 1968.
Plate No. 29. The opening ceremony at the CSA Gallery at 66 Gloucester Street, 8 March 1968.
Plate No. 30. The Sidney Nolan *Riverbend* and *Ned Kelly* exhibition held at the CSA’s Gloucester Street gallery from April 18–May 12 1968.
paintings... are returned after being shown in Christchurch only, and I suggest that the
Arts Council consider meeting the cost of moving them around New Zealand.'135
Mair proposed that the Auckland gallery was the most suitable public gallery and that
if Docking was agreeable, he would write to him, requesting that Nolan’s Ned Kelly
paintings which were to be sent to Auckland from Australia for exhibition, also be
made available to the CSA.136 Docking agreed to Mair’s proposal.137 The full extent
of Mair’s ambitions for the Society’s success as a leading public gallery was evident
in a further letter to Peters in March 1968 in which Mair told him that the CSA should
be given preference over the McDougall Gallery still directed by the elderly
Baverstock:

I feel sure that Baverstock feels relieved when he isn’t asked to mount a
travelling exhibition and also that he has come around to the idea that
displaying them is a good useful role for our gallery, whereas the McDougall’s
role is best for the display of the City’s permanent collection. He hasn’t said so
in these words but it is evident enough.138

How adequate was the new building to the ambitions of Mair and the CSA council?
In a newsletter prior to the gallery’s opening, the CSA’s future had been outlined in
glowing terms.

Our Society stands upon the threshold of tremendous exciting development....
We must step boldly and confidently. The alternative is to have nothing. Would
we really like to hire space at the McDougall, Hays roof or some other hall for
our Autumn Exhibition or any other of our activities?... The gallery envisaged by
Mr Stewart Minson, a former Councillor of the society, and his partners Mr H.
Henning-Hansen and Mr Dines, will be an amenity for Christchurch as well as
our headquarters. It is becoming abundantly obvious that the major role in the
plastic arts in Christchurch is being played by the society..... in Durham Street
we live in the past. Behind our sold brick walls we might have been a secret
society, or prison, in the public view.... The new gallery will reverse this.... The

135 Mair to David Peters, 14 November 1967, Director’s Correspondence, 1965-1989, Box 55, CAG 1,
Christchurch Art Gallery Library.
136 Ibid.
137 Mair to David Peters, 23 January 1968, Director’s Correspondence, 1965-1989.
138 Mair to David Peters, 11 March 1968, Director’s Correspondence 1965-1989.
new gallery will permit the effective continuous display of the society’s own
collection.... away from the plastic arts, there is much our new gallery could do
for the city – chamber music, certain kinds of intimate theatre, recitals, less
cultural but vigorous activities like fashion displays and so on. It is hard to say
how much activity the gallery will generate, but there is certainly everything to
suggest that it will become a very swinging place.139

The Gloucester Street gallery consisted of four main exhibition spaces with a lower
gallery, two first floor galleries, and a mezzanine level, comprising 914 square metres
of floor space and 70 metres of hanging space. It was almost double the size of the
Durham Street gallery.140 However, it had been built at a minimal cost with the lift
cut from the budget and an absence of storage space.141 Moreover, the day prior to
the opening, rain caused flooding throughout the gallery due to the builder’s failure to
ensure adequate drainage through the concrete block walls. Warren recalled:

We only had so much money so emphasis was placed on getting the essentials
in.... The building had just been completed and the first exhibition hung. It had
never been tested by heavy rain. The concrete block was very absorbent and
water that came down should have gone out, but the builders had not opened up
the weep holes.... There was Rusty [Laidlaw] and the council with brooms, and
the water was rushing down the stairs.... [However] it was an impressive
building. The design of the Mair Gallery was suitable to a big scale and the
[later] McCahon exhibition [Ten Big Paintings]142 was a huge excitement.143

Certainly, the gallery’s ‘Brutalist’ design has retained its integrity. A publication on
Christchurch architecture commissioned by the New Zealand Institute of Architects in
2005 praised its façade as a ‘bold street frontage in Gloucester Street [that] speaks of
“the precise care for natural materials.”144 As the Society’s council intended, the

CSA News, No. 33, September 1970, p. 1. Scandrett was editor of News and the CSA vice-

141 CSA minutes, 8 April 1971. In 1971 the gallery was extended to the site’s boundaries, with the
addition of a workshop, classroom and storage facilities.
142 CSA News, No. 36, March 1971, p. 5. McCahon’s work was included in Ten
Big Paintings, held at the Gloucester Street gallery from 17 November to 17 December 1971.
143 Interview, Warren, 14 July 2006.
144 Gavin Willis, Selected Architecture Christchurch. A Guide, Christchurch: New Zealand Institute of
Architects, 2005.
Gloucester Street gallery fully engaged artists and supporters, as well as the academic, legal and business community of the city, and its success reflected an increasing national interest in the arts. Ott recalls that:

Nothing happened at the [Robert] McDougall Art Gallery.... The CSA was patronised by a lot of erudite people interested in music and the arts. People who read widely and went to concerts.... The CSA was the centre of cultural and artistic life. It was supported by university people, lawyers and architects. It was a particular mixture and a place to talk about art, to talk about all aspects of culture.145

The Governor-General had commented on the inclusive nature of the inaugural exhibitions, noting ‘that the society had expanded its activities to include painting, sculpture, architecture, pottery, and other arts.’146 Discussion among the CSA council following the opening shows its wish to support the arts in the widest possible sense:

One man shows were mentioned... Chamber music, Library, Pottery, Craft Shows, dress shows and clothing, jazz bands, folk singers combined artists’ shows, and commentaries on shows, [the] permanent collection using picture of the week, plays and poetry readings, weaving and spinning, furniture exhibitions, art appreciation and panel discussions.... Ladies of the council were asked to institute enquiries re possibility of clothing displays in relation to painting.147

Lunchtime concerts were held regularly, including a recital by the Christchurch Chamber Orchestra during the 1968 Town and Country exhibition.148 In its first twelve months, the new gallery featured 27 solo exhibitions by artists such as David Cheer, William Cumming, Betty Curnow, Michael Smither and Olivia Spencer-Bower. In addition, the Society supported survey exhibitions of national importance, holding the first Benson and Hedges Award in May 1968. With a prize of $3,000, the competition was the most valuable in New Zealand and attracted the country’s leading artists. The 1968 entries included works by Patrick Hanly, Gordon Walters, Milan

145 Interview, Ott, 30 June 2006.
147 CSA minutes, 14 March 1968.
Mrkusich and winner Wong Sing Tai. It was complemented by a group show from the New Zealand Print Council which featured work by Barry Cleavin, John Drawbridge, Patrick Hanly, Ralph Hotere, Juliet Peter and Mervyn Williams.

Alongside exhibitions of contemporary painting and prints were pottery and craft shows. The range of solo and group shows held by the Society’s programme was deliberately inclusive, as well as financially pragmatic. The council needed to pay off the $50,000 owed on the mortgage on the building and increasing membership subscriptions was critical to reducing debt. A membership drive was thus undertaken. Laidlaw’s enthusiasm for the task witnessed an increased in membership from 800 in 1963 to an impressive 1300 in 1968. Critical to this campaign was the inclusion of new arts groups. A precedent was set in August 1961 when the CSA approved the formation of an architectural division within the Society’s membership. Moreover, the CSA had regularly exhibited work by invited guest potters such as Len Castle since 1958. This was part of an unwritten but deliberate policy to broaden its support for the arts. Consistent with this was the admission of the Canterbury Potters Society as working members in September 1964.

The CSA’s growing exhibition programme in the late 1960s was both evidence of its ambitions in the arts and its confidence in making the most of the larger spaces in the new gallery. Olivia Spencer-Bower proposed thematic group shows, including ‘Canterbury at Work’ and ‘Golden Fleece,’ which revealed aspects of hand-craft in wool: “Spinning, weaving, dyeing, rug making, knitting etc,’ and painting.” It was suggested that the wool board be approached and that shearing champion, Godfrey Bowen, provide gallery demonstrations with live sheep. Similarly, solo exhibitions were even further encouraged, with a 20% commission refunded to the artist if sales exceeded $100. In its opening year, the most significant solo show was an

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151 Braxton, ‘New Showcase.’
152 CSA minutes, 22 August 1961.
153 CSA minutes, 16 December 1957.
154 CSA minutes, 10 September 1964.
155 CSA minutes, 11 April 1968.
156 CSA minutes, 2 May 1968.
157 CSA minutes, 11 April 1968.
exhibition of 100 works by Sydney Thompson in which the CSA assumed responsibility for all associated costs.158

By January 1969, the Society’s magazine could express confidence that the Gloucester Street gallery had extended the CSA’s allegiance to the arts, providing both greater variety and wider community involvement.159 These comments were handsomely vindicated over the following six years as the new gallery, with its expansive exhibition spaces, attracted emerging and senior New Zealand artists. In 1969 Michael Smither was awarded the Frances Hodgkins fellowship and his hard-edged realist paintings at the CSA gallery were compared to the work of Rita Angus and Leo Bensemann.160 Graduate John Parker, responded to the gallery’s exhibition spaces with a show of eleven large paintings in 1970.161 Encouraged by Laidlaw, in 1971 Tony Fomison held an exhibition of religious subjects and paintings based on illustrated advertisements from magazines.162 Graduate shows were also enthusiastically nurtured by Laidlaw163 and an exhibition and installation by Neil Dawson, Bruce Edgar, Ross Marwick and Boyd Webb was described in the Press as ‘taking full advantage of the space offered by the gallery to involve the spectators from as many points of view as possible.’164 (Plate 31) Senior artists such as W. A. Sutton also made good use of the monumental gallery space. In 1970 he exhibited eighteen large paintings from the Landscape Element series. The exhibition was praised by Press reviewer – and a former student - Trevor Moffitt as representing ‘Sutton’s richest statements in colour, moving through soft browns, yellows, oranges and greys.’165 Tom Taylor installed works that were part of a self-contained environment in the Mair Gallery in 1972. Palladian Subdivision was described by the artist as reflecting ‘how we are living at the moment.’166 Another senior figure, Colin McCahon, exhibited ten paintings based on Muriwai Beach that would soon become

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158 CSA minutes, 2 May 1968.
159 Ibid.
160 Press, 30 October 1969, p. 16.
166 Christchurch Star, 14 April 1972, p. 8.
Plate No. 31. Exhibition of works by senior students from the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts in the Mair Gallery, June 1971. The artists were Neil Dawson, Bruce Edgar, Ross Marwick and Boyd Webb.
part of New Zealand’s art historical canon, including ‘Moby Dick.’ In 1975 a touring exhibition of McCahon’s 1940s religious paintings was held, receiving considerable praise from arts reviewer Rodney Wilson who maintained that:

We are fortunate in being able to experience for the first time since the pioneering years in which they took form, a meaningful number of works which were to be of the utmost significance for the painter. It is an exhibition which should not be missed.

That same year, work by Don Peebles was similarly well received with Wilson commenting that ‘There can be little doubt that Peebles has become one of the country’s most important painters.’

The CSA assumed an authority that was recognised nationally and it was invited to host the 1972 Benson and Hedges Art Award. The Press reported that:

The decision to make Christchurch the focal point of this year’s Benson and Hedges Art Award has been welcomed by the president of the Canterbury Society of Arts, (Mr Miles Warren)... the official opening will be at the C.S.A. Gallery on June 7..... Mr Warren said that the award held biennially, had always attracted artists of the highest quality. The likely entrants and the unrestricted nature of the competition were an assurance of an exciting exhibition which would create enormous national interest. The Canterbury Society of Arts, considered it an honour to have been asked to hold the official opening and the exhibition of selected entries, said Mr Warren. The decision was a recognition of the quality of work being done by Canterbury artists, and also of the role being played by the society.

The CSA council also curated historical and contemporary exhibitions. In July 1968, lecturer in design at the School of Fine Arts, Maurice Askew curated an introduction to current printmaking. ‘Print 68’ was an exhibition that included lithographic

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169 Press, 12 July 1975, p. 17.
printing presses, etchings, woodcuts and screen printing processes. It was accompanied by cardboard sunhats, fold-up pencil cases and balloons with fliers detailing differences between printing processes. Peebles curated a 1969 exhibition, ‘Drawing into Painting,’ bringing together work by; Melvin Day, John Drawbridge, Ted Francis, Ralph Hotere, Richard Lovell-Smith and John Perry. The exhibition was described as ‘an interesting experiment which should assist the layman in understanding the processes that go into making a painting.’ Other thematic exhibitions included a show of work by artists featuring in a 1906 photograph of Sydney Thompson’s Art Club; Thompson himself, Edwin Bartley, Charles Bickerton, Leonard Booth, William Menzies Gibb, Kennaway Henderson, Cecil Kelly, Raymond McIntyre and Alfred Walsh. In addition, Taylor established and curated contemporary sculpture exhibitions and formed a sculptors’ group, which exhibited in the Gloucester Street gallery in August 1970. It was reported in the CSA News that:

Local sculptors recently formed themselves into what is to be known as the Sculptors’ Group with the following aims: To promote sculpture. To maintain and protect the interests of sculptors. To seek in every way to encourage public interest in sculpture. To aim for the highest professional standards in education and practice.... Members of the Sculptors’ Group are: Tom Taylor (president), Carl Sydow (secretary-treasurer), Christine Hellyer, Ria Bancroft, Nola Barron, Colleen Newton, Allan Strathern, John Turner, John Doudney, Laurence Karasek, Neil Dawson, Jack Nuttall, David Jackson, Michael Trumie and Tony Fomison.

Jonathan Mané-Wheoki maintains that Taylor’s sculpture group revealed a ‘new excitement in the discipline,’ and that the ‘gap between the conservatives and the progressives in the visual arts yawned wide open.’ Complementing these contemporary exhibitions in 1972, Warren curated an architectural exhibition which

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171 Interview, Maurice Askew, 28 June 2006. Although the exhibition was not documented in the CSA newsletter, a file of material associated with the show is held by Askew and identifies the exhibition dates as 17-31 July 1968.
included photographs and drawings of Christchurch buildings by 30 local architects and celebrated Canterbury’s position as a leading architectural centre.\textsuperscript{177} This was followed in June 1973 by a show of contemporary furniture, consisting of pieces borrowed from 73 homes of local architects and other private residences as well as two Christchurch stores which ‘enticed more people into the gallery than we have seen for some time.’\textsuperscript{178} In June 1974, Warren established an annual survey show of Canterbury art as part of the Christchurch Arts Festival. It was proposed that the exhibition be ‘confined to selected Canterbury Artists... [and] called [the] President’s Exhibition.’\textsuperscript{179} Warren outlined the reasoning behind the new annual show in the CSA News and drew attention to the Society’s commitment to the range and quality of art represented. Warren claimed that as the CSA had the ‘good fortune through the efforts of past members and ourselves of owning this fine gallery which is far larger and better designed and equipped than any gallery in this fine country... So the duty of your Council is to use this gallery to the best advantage, to show and promote the whole spectrum of art that is available to us.’\textsuperscript{180} In 1975 the broad taste of the President’s exhibition included 53 paintings, 26 pieces of weaving, four sculptures, and 10 pieces of greenstone jewellery... mostly by Canterbury painters, potters, weavers, and sculptors.\textsuperscript{181}

To what extent did the Society’s inclusive and broad ranging exhibition programme encompass the work of Maori artists? In December 1965 Chinese and Ngati Raukawa artist, Buck Nin, had held a solo exhibition in the Durham Street gallery. Nin had studied at the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts and his show coincided with his graduation.\textsuperscript{182} Yet, as part of a relatively small generation of emerging Maori artists who had trained ‘under the inspiration of Gordon Tovey,’ his exhibition in the Society’s gallery remained an exception. The most noteworthy evidence of support for Maori artists was in the CSA receiving funding assistance from the Association of New Zealand Art Societies in 1970 for the University Maori Club’s exhibition and

\begin{footnotesize}
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  \item\textsuperscript{177} Press, 5 May 1972, p. 8.
  \item\textsuperscript{178} CSA News, No. 51, September-October 1973, p. 2.
  \item\textsuperscript{179} CSA minutes, 12 June 1974.
  \item\textsuperscript{180} CSA News, No. 42, March 1972, pp. 7-8.
  \item\textsuperscript{181} Press, 12 March 1975, p. 11.
  \item\textsuperscript{182} Jonathan Mane-Wheoki, ‘Buck Nin and the Origins of Contemporary Maori Art,’ Art New Zealand 82, Autumn 1997, pp. 61-62.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
workshop in the Gloucester Street gallery.\(^{183}\) While this recognition of non-traditional Maori art might appear limited, in retrospect it must be acknowledged that this important dimension of late twentieth-century Aotearoa New Zealand art still had a very low profile, especially in a centre as consciously, and indeed, demographically ‘Anglo-Saxon’ as Christchurch.

The Group maintained its annual exhibition in the Gloucester Street gallery and this long-standing association also contributed to the Society’s standing. However, by 1970 any such prestige resided more in the reputation of individual members, rather than in the collective impact of the Group’s annual exhibition. Trumic recalls that:

The Group [status] was critical to the CSA. People in the Group were influential outside it.... The lecturers from art school... all used to meet once or twice a month with the whole lot. Some of them used to meet every week on Friday at the hotel on Victoria Street, The Market. Every lecturer at the art school was present, including Don Peebles, and their contact with one another went all the way through to younger artists such as Phil Clairmont and Fomison.\(^{184}\)

Trumic maintains that the Group artists regarded themselves as more professional than the majority of the Society’s other members. This is also confirmed by Bracey, who argues that the Group was exclusive and reluctant to encourage younger artists to participate in its exhibitions. He recalls:

I always felt the Group was an elite part of the CSA. They saw themselves as part of it and also better than [rank-and-file members]. They were having their cake and eating it. They would not invite a younger artist to exhibit two years in row, but instead, make the invitation every other year. They were encouraging younger artists, but not to become permanent members of the Group. They kept the Group exactly as it was.\(^{185}\)

Alongside this broad exhibition programme, the CSA also assisted the McDougall Gallery through the shared displays of works from touring exhibitions that were too


\(^{184}\) Interview, Trumic, 12 June 2006.

\(^{185}\) Interview, Bracey, 11 July 2006.
large for one gallery. The appointment of Brian Muir, in succession of the long-serving Baverstock, as director of the public gallery in 1969\textsuperscript{186} was accompanied by belatedly improved relations between the two institutions. In 1971 the CSA and the McDougall Gallery collectively exhibited the Auckland City Art Gallery’s touring show ‘Ten Big Paintings.’\textsuperscript{187} The decision to share the exhibition was regarded as a milestone and this was reported accordingly in the newspapers.\textsuperscript{188} A further collaboration occurred in 1972 with the division of works from the touring exhibition *Recent British Painting* between the two institutions.\textsuperscript{189}

National confirmation of the CSA’s leading role in the arts was made soon after the gallery opened, in a 1968 article in *Vogue New Zealand* by critic Hamish Keith, who surveyed the four main centres. He singled out the Society and its gallery as being crucial to an emerging contemporary art:

> The Canterbury Society of Arts is the most flourishing in the country. Its bright new gallery is the first to be built in a major city since the ‘Thirties.’ By default it acts as both a dealer gallery and the most advanced aspect of a public gallery. Most of the local avant-garde have supported the society at various times.\textsuperscript{190}

By 1972 it was widely acknowledged by the CSA’s membership that it was more than an art society. At the Annual General Meeting that year, it was proposed to remove the word society and that ‘the name Canterbury Society of Arts be registered in some other form.’\textsuperscript{191} Although the Society’s council and members never took the proposal too seriously, it was debated in the gallery’s newsletter, which suggested that the name be changed from the Canterbury Society of Arts to the CSA Gallery:

> What do we find taking place in the Gallery these days? Instead of just periodical exhibitions we have a near continuous succession of one-man shows, music, workshops, national exhibitions, poetry readings, fairs, pottery and

\textsuperscript{186} Roberts, *Concise History*, p. 82.
\textsuperscript{187} *Press*, 8 December 1971, p. 10. Although dismissive of the exhibition’s pretensions the *Press* noted that in the Mair Gallery ‘the one painting that really justifies the exhibition is Colin McCahon’s ‘Gate III.’
\textsuperscript{188} *Christchurch Star*, 17 August 1971, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{189} *Christchurch Star*, 10 May 1972., p. 28.
\textsuperscript{191} CSA minutes, 92\textsuperscript{nd} Annual General Meeting, undated [1972].
weaving shows... as well as the Society’s own “Autumn” and “Open” exhibitions. The Society has its own selling gallery of growing importance and an active and successful picture hire scheme.... Indeed it is “promoting the study, practice and cultivation of the fine arts in New Zealand” but on a scale certainly not envisaged by the writers of our present Constitution and far beyond the image conveyed by the phrase “Society of Arts” elsewhere in New Zealand. We are a vital, stimulating Society of national significance, and our name must reflect that fact. 192

The wide-ranging responsibilities that the CSA had assumed in the art world were as evident in its advocacy for developing contemporary craft as for painting and sculpture. Until the early 1960s, respect for New Zealand craft had been negligible. 193 The CSA’s annual exhibition in 1956 had included a survey show of English ceramics lent by the Canterbury Museum and items from the collection of CSA president, A. A. G. Reed, 194 but the work of Canterbury potters or even New Zealand potters was absent and rarely exhibited. In 1958, debate about working members’ rights and the quality of work displayed at the Society’s exhibitions questioned the absence of pottery. John Oakley asked why potters were not included and it was suggested that in Canterbury at least, the work was unskilful. 195 The distinction between craft and painting, with the latter perceived as a more serious form of artistic expression, was difficult to break. In May 1963 it was even suggested that any craft artist who exhibited with the CSA should be restricted from exhibiting as a painter:

It would be necessary to create a distinction between other categories of artists such as sculptors, potters, miniature painters and so on. In particular, a working member selected in sculpture, potting, miniature painting, architecture, etc, would not be a working member in painting.196

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193 Peter Cape, Please Touch, A survey of the three-dimensional arts in New Zealand, Auckland: Collins, 1980, p. 16. Cape notes the increasing interest in craft from the late 1950s, but also mentions the existence of an ongoing patronising attitude from sections of the fine art community.
194 CSA minutes, 17 March 1956.
195 CSA minutes, 27 February 1958.
196 CSA minutes, 2 May 1963, inserted document. This anonymous comment is made and recorded, but crossed out in pencil in the minutes.
However, the CSA council was under growing pressure to give more serious consideration to craft and when Brooke was appointed secretary in 1960, he encouraged local potters to submit their work for exhibition. A national adult education workshop in ceramics at the Canterbury College School of Art in 1958 had led Yvonne Rust to establish the ‘Studio of Design’ craft centre in Christchurch in 1960. By 1963 the change in the Society’s programme was evident when painter Valerie Heinz exhibited in conjunction with Trumic. In September 1964 a letter to the CSA from the Canterbury Potters Association seeking membership was acknowledged by Oakley who responded that ‘the society looks forward to having pottery at the annual autumn exhibition.’ Although this may have been a practical decision to increase membership, Trumic recalled that there was also an important shift in the way in which the CSA council and members, as well as the wider art community, valued craft. There was a rejection of the hierarchy that identified the primacy of painting in the arts:

The huge influences of Bernard Leach, followed by Hamada, were important in changing things. The Japanese perceived art as the art of painting, or the art of building or the art of pottery. That broadening of perceptions of what art could be was a very powerful idea that went through Australia, America, and New Zealand.

Vital to such changes in Christchurch was the visit by the master potter himself, Shoji Hamada, in 1965 as guest of the first Pan-Pacific Arts Festival. Hamada held workshops in Rust’s Christchurch studio that were attended by leading potters such as Barry Brickell, Len Castle, Mary Hardwick and Mirek Smisek. Following Hamada’s visit, Peter Beaven organised a highly successful exhibition of the decorative arts at the Durham Street gallery that consolidated the growing respect for craft. The CSA News reported that:

The exhibition showed the range of the decorative arts in New Zealand and was intended to offer some hope towards the conception of New Zealand buildings.

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197 Deverall, pp. 6-7.
199 CSA minutes, 10 September 1964.
200 Interview, Trumic, 11 July 2006.
201 Deverall, pp. 11-12.
and rooms having decorations and finish suitable to our way of life. Exuberantly
designed, the show was a visual feast for the eyes.... An important section of the
exhibition was the outstanding examples of pottery, weaving, jewellery from the
hands of internationally acclaimed craftsmen..... Among the contributors were a
number of commercial art studios, students from the Christchurch Teachers’
College, local manufacturers and Christchurch craftsmen, artists and designers.
Over 2000 people visited the exhibition.202

By 1967 potters and craftspeople such as Nola Barron, David Brokenshire, Rosemary
Perry and Mirek Smisek were regular contributors to CSA exhibitions.203 In
November 1967 a survey show of New Zealand ceramics by the Potters Association
was held at the Durham Street gallery as part of the Pan Pacific Arts Festival204 and
the following month a review of the CSA’s 1967 Summer Exhibition noted that:

The display of pottery reflects the impact made by the visit of the Japanese potter
Hamada during the first Pan Pacific Arts Festival. With an astonishing upsurge
of creativity New Zealand potters have now reached world standards.205

By 1969 potters were seeking to advance their practice further. Rust organised an
exhibition of outdoor ceramics, challenging local artists to consider the scale and
purpose of their work.206

The CSA could have received no better public endorsement of its programme than
that provided in July 1969 by Eric Westbrook, director of the National Gallery of
Victoria, who ‘applauded... [the Society’s] policy of broadening gallery activities to
embrace pottery, music, architecture and so on.’207 Significantly, in November that
year the CSA awarded its silver medal to Rust for services to the arts and to pottery.
It was stated that: ‘Her contribution to New Zealand pottery in its formative years was
immeasurable and many of the finest potters in the country owe their success to

204 CSA News, No. 16, November 1967, p. 3.
her. This respect for New Zealand craft was further consolidated by a touring survey exhibition in the CSA gallery in 1970 of pottery from Pacific countries. Organised by UNESCO and the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, it consisted of decorative art and craft from Australia, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia and New Zealand. It was described as ‘probably the most valuable crafts exhibition to come to New Zealand, the 48 pieces in the Japanese section alone being insured for a total of $100,000.' The New Zealand section featured work by Doreen Blumhardt, Barry Brickell, Brokenshire, Castle, and Mirek Smisek. The Press observed that ‘Without making allowance for the comparatively recent development of handicrafts in New Zealand, considerable pride can be taken in the standard being achieved in pottery and weaving in particular.’

As the status of pottery grew, craft practice in general increased and weavers and spinners also began to exhibit at the CSA. In September 1969 an exhibition titled ‘Clay, Wood and Wool’ featured pottery by Brokenshire, carved wood pieces by Noeline Brokenshire and weaving by Karen Wakely. Throughout the 1970s, weaving assumed a significant role in solo and group exhibitions, as well as in the Group shows. In December 1970 the CSA News reported on the recently-established guild of Spinners and Weavers:

The Canterbury Guild of Spinners and Weavers was formed in April, 1969. Up till this time, weavers in particular were struggling along as best they could on their own. Many spinners had formed groups which enabled them to meet together and discuss their work and problems connected with it. The main purpose of the guild is to pool ideas and skills with the aim of improving the standard of weaving in Christchurch. The guild is a member of the World Crafts Council.

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208 CSA minutes, 10 November 1969, Inserted document.
210 Press, 1 September 1970, p. 11.
213 CSA News, No. 34, November-December 1970, p. 3.
In the 1950s weaving, like pottery, had been perceived as a minor art form. Art commentator Peter Cape maintained that the 1970s witnessed significant changes in its practice and appreciation:

There were one or two looms in the Canterbury School of Fine Arts in the 1950s, for the use of diploma students taking what was then known as the ‘craft course’, but anyone who wanted to continue weaving seriously afterwards had little alternative but to buy an expensive imported loom, if and when such a thing became available.... it was only in the early seventies that weaving began to be shown in any large quantity. The organisers of exhibitions such as the World Craft Council's New Zealand-Asian exhibition of 1970, and the New Zealand Academy’s first show of pottery and weaving, were among the first to recognise the weavers as a substantial part of the cultural scene.

Weavers also sought to extend the limitations of their practice and an exhibition in September 1972 contested the use of traditional tools:

Some contemporary weavers are challenging the use of the conventional loom as a tool. It imposes restrictions such as not allowing the weaver to view his composition as a whole, nor to make spontaneous change while he works....

Weavers exhibiting are: Jenny Hunt, Mary Bartlett, Pauline Pease, Doreen Frazer, Suzanne Turner, Marianne Van Der Lingen, Philippa Vine, Nancy Mason, Vivien Mountfort, Anne Field.

A similar testing of the boundaries of traditional methods was evident in an exhibition by the Canterbury Embroiders’ Guild in May 1974 which was praised by the Christchurch Star: 'Here is another fine craft in which there has been an upsurge of interest during the past few years, and the 144 exhibits on view show an astonishing range of fine needle work in contemporary as well as traditional styles.'

In 1974 the CSA’s authority as a centre for artistic practices by the country’s leading artists culminated in a survey exhibition of New Zealand art that filled the entire

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214 Cape, pp. 121-122.
Gloucester Street gallery. The exhibition coincided with the 1974 Christchurch Commonwealth Games with the idea evolving from a proposal by the Society’s council to approach Rothmans or Benson and Hedges to sponsor a national art competition.\textsuperscript{217} Failing to secure sponsorship, the CSA itself decided instead to hold a survey show of paintings, prints, pottery, weaving, jewellery and sculpture.\textsuperscript{218} In October 1972 an ambitious list of participants was drawn up. It consisted of:

- 44 painters – 1 painting [each] not exceeding 24 sq ft.
- 26 potters – up to four works.
- 17 weavers – 1 entry not exceeding 24 sq ft.
- 16 sculptors – 1 entry not exceeding 125 cubic ft longest dimension not exceeding 6ft.
- 3 jewellers.\textsuperscript{219}

The exhibition opened in January 1974 with both the \textit{Press} and the \textit{Listener} commenting on the range and quality of the show. (Plate 32) Moffitt observed:

With almost 40 painters exhibiting one work each there is an enormous diversity in style in this part of the exhibition. Painters such as Irene Richards, W.A. Sutton, Graham Barton, Leo Bensemann, Don Binney, Bill Cumming, Ian Hutson, Susan Chaytor, Patrick Hanly, Gretchen Albrecht, Robert Ellis, Quentin Macfarlane, John Coley, Colin McCahon, Don Driver, Michael Eaton, Collette Rands, Michael Smither, Olivia Spencer-Bower, Brent Wong, Louise Lewis, Charles Tole, Doris Lusk, Phil Clairmont, Don Peebles, Paree Romanides and Tony Fomison are represented by good examples of their work, produced in their various established styles. Fomison’s 10ft-long “Holbein’s Dead Christ No. 2” is a most sombre and impressive example of his work.\textsuperscript{220}

Former CSA secretary Barbara Brooke reviewed the exhibition in the \textit{Listener} and noted that it was a ‘Who’s Who’ of New Zealand art and craft:

\textsuperscript{217} CSA minutes, 11 February 1971.
\textsuperscript{217} CSA minutes, 11 February 1971.
\textsuperscript{218} CSA minutes, 24 October 1972.
\textsuperscript{219} CSA minutes, 24 October 1972.
Canterbury Society of Arts Archives, CAG1, Box No. 11, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu.

Plate No. 32. Art NZ 74 in the Mair Gallery, 18 December 1973-6 January 1974. This photograph of the exhibition depicts works by Gretchen Albrecht and Robert Ellis.
Artists throughout the country were invited to participate, and were chosen from recommendations of municipal gallery directors throughout the country. Unhappily there are gaps and some notable names are missing from the catalogue in each section.... However, the Canterbury Society of Arts has largely overcome this problem and mounted what can be regarded as a significant survey—almost a “Who’s Who” of art and craft in this country and one that will give visitors a comprehensive picture of New Zealand art in 1974..... On entering the main gallery one’s first impressions are of an abundance of colour, vitality and exuberance.... New Zealand is fortunate to have many highly competent printmakers and the 13 who were invited to exhibit two works each considerably enhanced the importance of the exhibition.... About 18 potters accepted the invitation to exhibit and although some better known craftsmen declined, those participating easily maintained New Zealand potters’ excellent reputation.... Margaret Milne and Irene Spiller exhibited some fine porcelain. The balance of the craft section of the exhibition consisted of work by four jewellers and 14 weavers. Their exhibits filled out this comprehensive display of New Zealand art by adding to the variety of materials, colours and textures on view and by maintaining the standard of technical and creative excellence so apparent in the other sections of the exhibition.\(^{221}\)

In the 1970s the CSA’s exhibition programme far exceeded the expectations of its founding council and represented the consummate realisation of its ambitions for the arts. The 1974 Commonwealth Games exhibition of leading New Zealand artists represented the culmination of the CSA council’s aspirations for the representation of the arts in Christchurch. The Society’s programme during this period was vital to the development of an emerging modern movement in New Zealand, not only through solo and group exhibitions, but also in its reception of touring exhibitions, the establishment of the Hay’s Art Competition, its awards for services to the arts and the CSA Guthrey Travel Award for promising artists. Rather than nurture the fine arts in an elitist manner, the CSA valued artistic and cultural expression at numerous levels in the community. The thriving crafts environment of the 1960s and early 1970s was intimately related to this comprehensive appreciation of the impact of the arts on

people’s lives in tangible and meaningful ways. While professionalism and specialisation in the arts from the late 1970s were to raise standards of curatorial practice, encouraging the emergence of full-time artists and fostering the growth of New Zealand art in public collections, it was at the cost of a cultural generosity and enthusiasm that embraced the work and vision of a wider community. This had applied regardless of the practitioner status; whether they were amateur or professional, craft artists or painters. In Canterbury throughout the 1960s and early 70s, the CSA fostered the development of art, while proving equally receptive to diverse practices and aesthetics. It encompassed, as Miles Warren put it, ‘the whole spectrum of art that is available… from Hotere to Kelliher… from young student sculptors to Rodin.’ It is an art world we have lost.

The Society remains true to both its working membership... as well as to the avant-garde. For some, this pot-pourri approach is unfortunately ambiguous in intent; after all, who are they catering for? Others see a curious vitality. It all depends on a point of view.¹

Following nearly two years of discussions, in May 1979 the CSA council finally agreed upon an exhibition schedule to commemorate the Society’s centennial in 1980.² The council’s proposed programme included the 1980 Benson and Hedges Award, solo exhibitions by Colin McCahon and M. T. Woollaston, an invitation-only show of contemporary Canterbury painters and the CSA’s Annual Autumn Exhibition.³ Its exclusion would have been unthinkable, but it made the council’s list with an accompanying note that additional selected artists would be invited to participate, no doubt to raise the standard of submissions. In addition, the council also seriously considered cancelling the members’ Summer Exhibition that year.⁴ As an institution whose working members had been fundamental to its principles and existence over the previous 99 years, the limited commitment to its current artist members in this inventory is telling. Why was the CSA council reluctant to draw too much attention to those enthusiastic amateurs whose annual subscriptions, exhibitions and regular sales of art work were fundamental to the Society’s purpose? Reviewing the centennial painters’ exhibition in Art New Zealand, council member and art commentator, John Coley, alluded to the CSA’s dilemma, and the conflict of interest between its amateur supporters and professional artists’ exhibitions. He reminded critics that the CSA exhibited the work of contemporary artists who ‘otherwise could not have been seen in Christchurch,’ and also reprimanded those individuals who maintained that the Society’s reputation was ‘less than serious.’⁵

Coley’s remarks drew attention to increasing conflicting perceptions about the Society’s role during a period in which arts practice in New Zealand underwent a dramatic transformation, probably the most significant changes in the administration

¹ Tom Weston, ‘The CSA’s Cultivation of the Arts,’ Art New Zealand, No. 40, Spring 1986, p. 65. Weston was a CSA council member at this time.
² CSA minutes, 14 July 1977 and 30 May 1979.
³ CSA minutes, 30 May 1979.
⁵ John Coley, ‘Christchurch,’ Art New Zealand, No. 18, Summer 1981, p. 15
of the arts since the establishment of art societies in the late nineteenth century. There was growing interest not only in exhibiting contemporary New Zealand artists’ work, but also in the formation of new specialist positions in public art galleries. This included the employment of full-time salaried directors, curators, education officers, registrars and exhibition officers, who replaced the amateurs and volunteers previously occupying such roles. The notion that a single organisation such as the CSA could successfully represent and articulate all tastes and ideologies, as well as dominate the local art market, was no longer perceived to be credible. Dealer galleries represented professional artists while the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council (QEII) funded important touring exhibitions. In this new environment, the amateur shows and activities of art societies appeared an anachronism. In Christchurch, this growing specialisation was evident in the opening of the Brooke Gifford Gallery in 1975; in the formation of the Arts Centre Trust to administer the Arts Centre of Christchurch in 1978; in the appointment of T. L. Rodney Wilson in 1978 as director of the McDougall Gallery; in the establishment of the positions of curator, education officer and conservator by the Christchurch City Council for the gallery; and in the opening of the Gingko print gallery and workshop in 1980. Within this environment, the CSA’s role was less than clear. It was perceived to be a conservative, amateur institution, and, at the same time, an arts organisation committed to the development of contemporary practice and the work of professional artists. How did the Society come to encompass and represent seemingly opposing aesthetics and principles and was such a perception of its role justified?

The need for greater professionalism was widely expressed by the CSA council in 1968 when the Gloucester Street gallery opened, but it had been evident to some observers several years earlier. Although critic Nelson Kenny had welcomed the Society’s extended exhibition programme in 1960, he had remained critical of its annual members’ shows. The range and number of works displayed were subjected to stern commentary in April 1961, with Kenny stating that ‘if the society can keep

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8 McCredie, p. 102.
9 Jule Einhorn to Nola Barron, 6 June 1980, Director’s Correspondence, 1965-1989, Box 55, CSA Files, CAG 1, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu.
from its walls the utter banal and worthless it will have taken another big step on the
new path which it is following. ¹⁰ Although the CSA was nationally recognised for
its advocacy of current, indeed contemporary art, it was also committed to the
complementary, even incompatible, ideals of nurturing its membership and the work
of both amateurs and professionals. It was the ‘party line’ to maintain that the arts in
Canterbury were more resilient because of such a policy. When architect and CSA
president Paul Pascoe opened the annual members’ exhibition in April 1962, he
pronounced that:

The Canterbury Society of Arts did not represent any one school of thought in
art. Its job was to give all a chance.... By this means we may work as one, for a
unity of art enthusiasts is a strong force indeed. ¹¹

To their credit, several leading Society council members who were recognised as
professional artists supported these shows and continued to exhibit in the Society’s
annual exhibitions until the mid-1980s. Olivia Spencer-Bower, Doris Lusk and Nola
Barron exhibited their work and, by example, encouraged numerous amateurs to do
the same. Not everyone was convinced by their example or by Pascoe’s inclusive
and pluralistic philosophy. Kenny described the 1964 exhibition as the ‘society’s
poorest show in several years’ and drew attention to the lack of work by serious
artists who preferred the professionalism of the Auckland dealer galleries. ¹²
However, the Society represented a collective voice for the arts. Because of growing
interest from artists in exhibiting as working members, an associate membership for
amateurs was proposed in May 1963. ¹³ This consisted of artists whose work was not
of a suitable standard for the annual exhibition but who could be encouraged through
an associate members’ show in spring. ¹⁴ Representation was to be a prerequisite for
consideration in the autumn exhibition. ¹⁵ The Associate members’ shows, however,
were criticised for the poor quality of work. Writing for the Press in 1964, John
Simpson commented that, ‘Whether the work of such members should be arranged as

¹² Press, 14 April 1964, p. 18.
¹³ CSA minutes, 7 May 1964. Membership of the CSA in May 1964 stood at 915 with 30 associate
members.
¹⁴ CSA minutes, 2 May 1963 and 2 April 1964.
a public exhibition is another matter, and many will probably feel that smaller exhibitions within the society... would provide a better opportunity in future.'16

Central to the problem of working membership was the large number of artists seeking to participate in such shows. In 1965 the Society received 348 submissions which, as the CSA council acknowledged, amounted to a 'glut.'17 The opening of the Gloucester Street gallery did little to alleviate this problem, with a report in the CSA News of the autumn show in 1968 bluntly pointing out that 'the CSA annual exhibition gets no better.'18 (Plate 33) The Society accepted the validity of these comments but maintained that it was not an exclusive, so much as an all-encompassing arts institution in which its membership played an important role. This fitted perfectly with the CSA council's desires to maintain the new gallery as a centre for a range of arts practices that included chamber music, plastic arts, fashion displays, and fine arts and craft, reflecting all aspects of culture. President Miles Warren recalls that, 'The CSA could not abandon its artists. They were the main source of revenue through membership. [Consequently] the summer show [or associate members exhibition] was brought in.'19 Simpson also notes that the Society's council felt a tremendous loyalty to its working members: 'It valued and respected its working members. After all, most of Canterbury's big names (like W. A. Sutton, Olivia Spencer-Bower, and Doris Lusk) belonged to this group.'20

However, by the 1970s working members' exhibitions became increasingly difficult to defend. Reviewing the associate members' exhibition in 1970, Moffitt argued that: 'The wisdom of continuing to hold an open exhibition must be questioned, for while the society is to be commended for wishing to encourage art in the community it must also be concerned about the standard of what it sponsors for public consumption.'21 Moreover, by 1975 an emerging professionalism became more than evident in Rodney Wilson's art reviews in the Press. He had recently returned from the Netherlands where he had completed a doctoral dissertation at Nijmegen followed

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19 Interview, Warren, 14 July 2006.
20 Interview, Simpson, 29 May 2006.
Plate No. 33. The 88th annual autumn exhibition at the CSA gallery, April 18-12 May, 1968.
Plate No. 33. The 88th annual autumn exhibition at the CSA gallery, April 18-12 May, 1968.
by an internship as a curator at the Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller.\textsuperscript{22} He brought an innovative rigour and knowledge of the arts to his reviews, recognising the strengths and limitations of artists' work as well as curatorial deficiencies. A review of paintings by Stephanie Sheehan and Joanna Hardy at the CSA in September 1975 met with his qualified approval and damnation, and offers a good example of his criticism:

Sheehan, who came across strongly in a recent exhibition in the McDougall Gallery, fails to reach that level here. Her militant feminism imparts an aggression to much of her painting which it could well do without. ... The battering which she feels it is necessary to give her public is pronounced in "Squash" and "Athlete's Sweat No. 15" and purposelessly feminist in "Viva Lady."\textsuperscript{23}

Wilson was demanding in his expectations and dismissive of amateurism. A review of sculptors Gypsy and Eddie Poulston at the CSA saw their work damningly described as 'making garden gnomes of once avant-garde concepts now laid to peace in the glades of historical acceptance.'\textsuperscript{24}

The Society seemed conscious of the need to respond positively to this changing professional environment. Coley's demands for the appointment of a director in 1968 to raise standards 'if the Society is to maintain its reputation as a vital force in Canterbury art,' were not forgotten.\textsuperscript{25} The success of the Commonwealth Games exhibition in 1974 led Warren to reiterate the need for the appointment of a director:

The exhibition showed what can be achieved collectively and the standard we must aim for. The Council has been aware for some time that a number of activities of the Society should be expanded and are only held back because of the time involved for an already over-burdened part time staff. We should be promoting and organising exhibitions of artists work rather than simply accepting what turns up as we end [sic] to do now.... Art '74 showed the potential of the Gallery. These thoughts resulted in probably the most

\textsuperscript{25} John Coley, 'From an Artist's Point of View,' \textit{CSA News}, No. 18, March 1968, p. 8.
important decision of the Council this year; that was to agree in principle that a
full time director of exhibitions should be appointed as soon as long term
finance could be organised. An outline of the terms of engagement for such an
appointment has been prepared and enquiries for a suitable person have been
started.26

Laidlaw’s resignation that same year may also have hastened the decision to make an
appointment.27 At the Society’s council meeting in December 1974 it was agreed
that Warren should write to Annella MacDougall to ascertain her interest in the
position,28 and her appointment was announced in the Christchurch Star in October
1975. The newspaper noted that with the selection of the 27-year-old director in
International Women’s Year, Christchurch had yet another positive female role­
model.29 The choice of a young and lively woman with experience in gallery
administration in New Zealand and overseas seemed to contrast with the elderly
Laidlaw’s enthusiasm and support for local professional and amateur artists.
MacDougall had worked at the Robert McDougall Art Gallery for two years prior to
assisting in a Melbourne dealer gallery, ‘Realities,’ and a number of London
galleries.30 A local newspaper eulogised:

Behind the exhibition room at the Canterbury Society of Arts Gallery there is a
quiet revolution in progress. The gallery has a new, youthful director, Annella
MacDougall. It is not just the jeans and shirt, and fresh, unadorned face that
makes it seem a new generation has moved into the CSA. Annella MacDougall
has returned to Christchurch from overseas with some ideas on art that are likely
to shake the traditionalists.31

MacDougall alluded to Laidlaw’s more generous and inclusive exhibition policy, and
outlined her intentions for greater care in the selection of work for exhibition, and her
commitment to craft practice:

26 Miles Warren, President’s Report, Annual General Meeting, 1974, CSA Filing Cabinet, B 001,
Canterbury Society of Arts Charitable Trust t/a COCA.
27 Laidlaw to Warren, 23 December 1974, Director’s Correspondence, Box 55, CAG 1.
28 CSA minutes, 19 December 1974.
30 Ibid.
31 Leone Stewart, ‘Youthful revolution at C.S.A,’ Unidentified and undated newspaper, CSA
...she is concerned tactfully but firmly, to raise the standard of the gallery’s exhibitions by being more selective.... Because she sees craft as part of today’s art Annella MacDougall will foster its expression in the gallery. Overseas she was much impressed by three dimensional weaving that became “something other than weaving.” Here, too, she will be very selective.... “There has been such demand that the quality [of craft] has dropped and we must regain it at the gallery.”

MacDougall inherited a well-planned programme. Among its highlights were an installation by Billy Apple, a major touring exhibition of contemporary Chinese craft, the Arts Festival exhibition, ‘Land 76,’ the National Weaving Award toured by the Dowse Art Gallery in Lower Hutt and the 1976 Benson and Hedges Art Award.

MacDougall was offered the National Weaving Award by the Dowse Art Gallery director, David Millar, who believed that the CSA was the perfect venue for the exhibition. Millar had been appointed director of the Dowse in 1971 and, like MacDougall, he represented a new and younger generation of gallery administrators. He favoured contemporary New Zealand art and craft, offering the CSA the weaving exhibition in preference to the McDougall Gallery. He wrote to MacDougall, informing her:

I do not intend to offer it to another Gallery for 1976, and feel that it would be well exhibited at the CSA and appeal to a lot of people in your area.... Brian [Muir] may be a little upset, but unfortunately the McDougall Gallery is not, I think, suitable for a large weaving exhibition.

Millar’s gesture of goodwill indicated his support for MacDougall and also confirmed that he believed that the CSA was similar to the Dowse as an arts institution committed to showcasing contemporary New Zealand art and craft.

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32 Ibid.
33 Press, 20 January 1976, p. 1 and Press, 31 January 1976, p. 13. The exhibition was insured for $350,000 and received 600 visitors a day.
34 McCredie, pp. 160-162.
35 David Millar to MacDougall, 31 October 1975, Director’s Correspondence, 1965 - 1989, Box 55, CAG 1.
However, MacDougall remained director for only 14 months, resigning in December 1976,\textsuperscript{36} intending to open a craft gallery in Christchurch.\textsuperscript{37} Why did she resign after such a short period of time, particularly as her appointment suggested that, like André Brooke, she was perceived to be a breath of fresh air? In the first instance, there is little evidence to suggest that she brought any greater degree of professionalism to the gallery than had been apparent under Laidlaw's management. Indeed, she lacked the necessary experience and his capacity to undertake the numerous gallery activities with the limited resources available. Gallery assistant Tony Geddes recalls:

There was a huge difference in age and personality [between Laidlaw and MacDougall]. Rusty was always there in an old-fashioned and philanthropic way... When he started helping in the gallery [in 1963] he took it over.... My experience was that almost immediately she [MacDougall] felt that she had made a mistake. She seemed to be a person who was not enjoying it. Rusty had an attitude of jolliness. He would help: “Get a back loading in,” he would say, reflecting an ethos of working really hard. Annella was probably not ready for this... The gallery was incredibly understaffed.\textsuperscript{38}

Geddes' comments also reveal that although the CSA council wished to raise standards, the lack of resources and professional administrative structures in place meant that more was required than merely the appointment of a full-time director who was, frankly, out of her depth. Certainly, reviews of 'Land 76,' which opened shortly after MacDougall's appointment, exposed significant gaps in the Society's ability to curate and present exhibitions. It was singled out for harsh criticism by Wilson:

...what could have inspired the CSA to extend its terms of reference as widely as it has for this show is beyond comprehension. The visitor is confronted, at once, with an arbitrary collection of the worst in formalised, conventionalised topographical landscape and a random selection of the work of serious contemporary artists. Obviously the CSA when confronted with the products of its own mischievous planning has felt the urge to impose some order upon

\textsuperscript{36} CSA minutes, Annual General Meeting, 8 December 1976.
\textsuperscript{37} CSA News, No. 72, March-April 1977, p. 11 and interview, Grant Banbury, 18 December 2006.
\textsuperscript{38} Interview, Tony Geddes, 11 December 2006.
the works, and so the viewer may be guided by what, in the mind of the CSA is obviously the first-fifteen on the middle floor, the reserves downstairs, and the also-rans on the mezzanine.... The result, however, must be an outrage to the serious artist.\(^{39}\)

Auckland art critic, Peter Bromhead, reviewed the exhibition for the *Christchurch Star* and drew attention to inadequacies in both the gallery’s facilities and the show’s curation:

> The space is excellent but suffers from poor wall finish, cluttered with rails, electrical plugs and other bits and pieces. The lighting is also inadequate.... The exhibition is sub-standard.... The work should have been culled to the bone. Better to show only a few paintings than to perpetuate this awful dreariness that passes for art.\(^{40}\)

Although MacDougall had experience in public and dealer galleries, her youth could not have prepared her for the varied demands of Society director. Public comments that she made about its future indicated a lack of awareness of how best to deal with the complications of the CSA’s programme and its amateur and professional artists. Although keen to champion contemporary art and craft and raise standards, she also claimed that, “there will probably be no major upheavals - not for a while anyway... “After all, the gallery belongs to the members, not to the weirds and wonderfuls.”\(^{41}\)

Doubts were also raised about MacDougall’s ability following her departure. Correspondence between her and the well-known English ceramicist, Alan Caiger-Smith, revealed that she had entered into a financial agreement with him that overly committed the Society. In January 1977, CSA councillor Simon Stamers-Smith wrote to the newly appointed director, Nola Barron, informing her of the problem:

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\(^{40}\) *Christchurch Star*, 10 March 1976, p. 4 and Miles Warren, President’s Report, Annual General Meeting, 1976, CSA Filing Cabinet, B 001. It must also be noted that although critically damned, ‘Land 76’ was financially the most successful exhibition held by the CSA up to that time. At the Annual General Meeting in 1976, Warren noted that ‘Sales of Land 76 exceeded $17,000, a Society record for such a show.’

\(^{41}\) Stewart.
...it is quite clear that there is a binding contract between Caiger-Smith and the Society. I would suggest from the letters that the following are the terms: 1. Prices – In its letters the Society has agreed that Caiger-Smith should set his own prices and this he has done, and therefore his prices are binding on us. 2. Purchases – Caiger-Smith has suggested two alternatives and we have stated quite unequivocally that we will purchase any unsold items. It therefore does not seem possible that we can either re-consign the whole shipment back to England or send back those items that are not sold... 42

Barron also recalls that little forward planning was evident: ‘There were very few exhibitions booked for the year ahead.’ 43

Barron’s directorship was to be far more successful. She maintained an empathy for amateur and professionals, a dedication to the Society and an ability to nurture the sense of community in its activities that Laidlaw had instigated. Indeed, while the arts in New Zealand moved towards a greater degree of professionalism, and an accompanying specialisation, remarkably, Barron effectively maintained the CSA’s commitment to amateurs and professionals across a range of aesthetics against the odds. (Plate 34)

Barron was employed as temporary director in December 1976, 44 and made permanent in March 1984. 45 She had been a council member since January 1975, having become interested in the arts later in life (she had worked as a pharmacist), primarily through her introduction to pottery by Yvonne Rust, and her enrolment at the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts from 1966 to 1968 as a non-diploma student, where she studied design, sculpture and drawing. 46 She became a working member of the CSA in 1967 and was an exhibiting member of The Group. 47 Barron

42 Stamers-Smith to Barron, 21 January 1977, Director’s Correspondence, 1965 – 1989, Box 55, CAG 1 and CSA minutes, 14 April 1977. The exhibition however, was a financial success for the Society with only four works unsold when it closed.
43 Interview, Nola Barron, 4 December 2006.
44 CSA minutes, 15 December 1976.
45 CSA minutes, 8 March 1984 and Interview, Derek Hargreaves, 14 March 2007. Barron expressed some reluctance to assume the position. Later confirmation of her position in 1984 was an administrative afterthought, rather than an expression of any reluctance on the part of the CSA council.
46 Bruce Scott, ‘Bruce Scott’s People,’ Christchurch Star, 17 February 1979, p. 10.
47 Roberts, p. 63.
Plate No. 34. Nola Barron photographed prior to her retirement as CSA director (1976-1986).
was also on the executive of the Canterbury Potters Association for two years and the Christchurch representative of the New Zealand Society of Potters, prior to joining the CSA council in 1975. When she was appointed director, she announced that she intended to make the CSA a “livelier place” and to involve its membership in the work of the gallery.48

Barron’s suitability for the position had thus been evident prior to her appointment. In March 1976 she agreed to curate an exhibition of invited craft artists, as one of three survey shows on contemporary art.49 Her allegiance to craft was opportune for the Society. Like modern New Zealand painting, in the 1970s contemporary craft revealed a nationalist spirit and local identity. Art writer Peter Cape noted in *New Zealand Painting Since 1960*:

> [Craft artists] created works which not only stood up to the standards of overseas imports, but which also carried an indefinable but recognisable feeling of the country... Both the craftsman and the artist were learning how to make those things which spoke of their own culture, not of one which derived from somewhere else.50

From the early 1970s, New Zealand craft had been gaining greater national attention. The developing craft movement fitted the agenda of newly-established contemporary public galleries such as the Dowse which “functioned as something of a community arts centre... exhibitions... included easy-to-relate-to work, especially craft, and themed fun exhibitions.”51 This interest in public participation in the arts was also evident in the programmes of the Manawatu Art Gallery and the Govett-Brewster Gallery, which also sought to empower visitors by ‘showing art that had relevance to audiences, such as crafts (work anyone could do and use).’52 Millar’s interest in touring the National Weaving Award reflected both his commitment to engaging larger audiences and to establishing higher standards for craft. Similarly, under Barron’s management, the CSA encouraged new gallery visitors and sought to

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48 *CSA News*, No. 72, March–April 1977, p. 11.
49 CSA minutes, 18 March 1976.
51 McCredie, p. 104.
52 McCredie, p. 242.
develop craft practice. The 1977 survey exhibition that Barron curated was an outstanding success. It filled the entire Gloucester Street gallery with large woven works in the Mair Gallery, craft in the North Gallery, decorative arts on the Mezzanine level and jewellery and ivory in the Print Room. It was reported in the CSA News that:

This will be the Society’s foremost exhibition of the year and will follow the format of its previous most successful Arts Festival exhibitions. The whole of the main gallery will be devoted to large hangings by North Island weavers. The other galleries will exhibit many different types of craft including pottery, prints, and the work of silversmiths but with only two or three leading artists in each field.

In addition to sales of more than $6,000, it brought together a range of craft practices and drew attention to the quality of local work. Barron advocated a more serious consideration of New Zealand craft, reporting to the newspapers:

Woven wall hangings were slow to sell, because they were wall hangings. Had they been paintings of exactly the same colour and design, they would have sold for five times the advertised price. Given time and exposure people would develop a taste for them.

At its Annual General Meeting in 1977, Warren announced to the Society’s members that the Fine Craft Exhibition revealed the CSA’s commitment to professional standards and reflected well on the director’s skill:

A craft exhibition on this scale with such a range of crafts and invited experts in each field was a first for the Society. It was difficult to foresee [sic] the quality of the exhibition and the public reaction to it. It was an enormous success, by far the best most comprehensive fine crafts seen in the Gallery, and largely done by our new director, her idea, her drive, her organisation. This

53 CSA minutes, 13 May 1976.
exhibition set the standard for the gallery management for the rest of the year—nothing less than first class professionalism.56

Although the Society had previously exhibited work by potters and weavers, in occupying the entire gallery, Barron’s exhibition gave a new status to craft and aligned the wider craft community more closely to the CSA. (Plate 35) Barron recalls that the exhibition attracted a range of practices and individuals who were to maintain an association with the gallery:

Craft grew through the CSA… By doing the Fine Craft show I got these groups together…. The Potters Association already rented the spaces for exhibition, and later on the woodworkers came in. When they found we were friendly they came along and rented the space…. We [also] included very good blown-glass works in exhibitions. Tony Kuepfer, Taranaki also had at least one solo show, jewellers such as Fingers, Auckland, Guenter-Taemmier, likewise.57

Under Barron’s directorship, the Society profiled a greater number of craft artists’ work and adopted a stronger advocacy and educational role. The Farmers Weaving Award was established in 1981 in conjunction with the CSA to celebrate the centennial year of the New Zealand Farmers Co-operative Association of Canterbury Ltd. It encouraged the use of New Zealand wool ‘in hand-made articles of the highest possible standard.’58 It was valued at $3,000 and the inaugural award was presented by Robert Bell, curator of crafts of the Art Gallery of Western Australia.59 The premium award went to Christchurch weaver, Eileen Chisholm, ‘whose masterly inlaid corduroy fleece rug so impressed him that he promptly bought it for his own collection.’60 The Society also supported craft through the presentation of the CSA Guthrey Travel Award to architect and potter David Brokenshire in 1977,61 and weaver and teacher Anne Field in 1983.62

56 Miles Warren, President’s report, Annual General Meeting, 1977, CSA Filing Cabinet, B 001.
57 Interview, Nola Barron, 4 December 2006.
60 Christchurch Star, 4 April 1981 and CSA News, No. 97, April–June 1981, p. 5. Bell was also invited by the New Zealand Craft Council, the Canterbury Potters Association and the Spinners and Weavers Guild to present a lecture on new trends and ideas in textiles and fibre art.
61 CSA minutes, 16 June 1977.
62 CSA minutes, 11 August 1983.
Plate No. 35. 'Moonspinner' by Sally-Ann [Greig] was included in the group exhibition 'Fibre-Hangings' at the CSA gallery in February 1978 and comprised wall hangings and free standing pieces.
Under Barron’s directorship, this recognition of the merit of craft was consolidated through exhibitions by international craft artists and curators, and by shows by local craftspeople. In addition to the solo exhibition of Caiger-Smith’s ceramics in 1976, the Canterbury Potters association regularly included work by guest ceramicists from America, Australia, England and Japan, as well as invited New Zealand potters such as Len Castle in 1979, while the 1980 Christchurch Arts Festival’s exhibition featured work by English potter David Eels, Australian embroiderer Heather Dorough, New Zealand tapestry weaver Margery Blackman, and master wood carver Tukaokoa. Furthermore, in 1983, a survey exhibition of ceramics from the Pacific region, ‘The Bowl – Asian Zone,’ toured by the Crafts Council and the Crafts Board of Australia, included work by New Zealand craft artists Donn Salt and Tanya Ashken. Local exhibitions included the Christchurch Artists Quarter which exhibited ceramics, wood carving and fleece weaving, the Guild of Woodworkers, the Canterbury Embroiderers, the Canterbury Potters Association, and the Halswell and Bishopdale potters’ groups.

Throughout the 1980s craft exhibitions made up approximately 25% of the Society’s annual programme, with shows that frequently sought to challenge the boundaries of craft practice. In 1979 Auckland weavers Yvonne and Ian Spalding were praised by Press reviewer David Brokenshire for the innovative scale of their work: ‘the floor rugs and hangings impart something of the effect of banners in a great medieval hall.’ That same year a group show, ‘Beyond Craft,’ presented work by a ‘leather craftsman, blacksmith, lampmaker, wood turner, [with] batik on silk, fibre sculpture and collage, art metalwork, [and] screenprinting.’ Aesthetically and economically the CSA’s craft exhibitions reflected national trends in the arts. In his book, Please Touch, Cape summarised the economic success of pottery sales during this period:

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63 CSA News, No. 85, May-July 1979, p. 11.
67 The CSA News documents 24 craft shows from a total of 98 exhibitions in 1982, 27 craft shows from a total of 108 in 1983, and 27 craft shows from a total of 121 exhibitions in 1986.
68 Press, 4 November 1979, p. 11.
69 Press, 7 November 1979, p. 28.
Of the established 500 potters currently working, one long-established and deeply involved potter believes that some 200 of them are potting fulltime. Whatever the number is, there is no doubt that it is high, and this is supported by official figures accepted by the Department of Industries and Commerce, which states that in 1978 New Zealand potters earned a staggering $7.25 million from the sales of domestic ware alone.\footnote{Cape, \textit{Please Touch}, p. 81.}

Locally, between 1979 and 1987 the CSA’s annual sales from craft exhibitions averaged $10,706, including record sales in 1980 of almost $15,600, with ceramicist David Brokenshire selling 160 pieces for $4,640.\footnote{Exhibition sales 1978–1988, Box No. 29, CAG 1.} However, the support for amateur craft practice was devastated by the deregulation of the economy by the 1984 Labour Government and, probably to a lesser extent, by the accompanying debate that took place in the art community over whether craft could be taken seriously as art. The economic reforms of the mid-1980s included floating the exchange rate and removing trade barriers and import licensing. The impact on the sale of New Zealand-produced craft was profound. Although this was most evident in the collapse of Crown Lynn, following the share market crash in 1987,\footnote{Valerie Ringer Monk, \textit{Crown Lynn. A New Zealand Icon}, Auckland: Penguin Books, 2006, pp. 135-141.} it also made a devastating impression on craft groups exhibiting at the CSA. In 1987, for the first time the Wood Workers’ Guild, the Bishopdale Potters’ Group and the Patchwork and Quilters’ Guild all held exhibitions without making a single sale.\footnote{Exhibition Sales CSA Gallery 1987–1988, Box 29, CAG 1.}

Although such groups had previously been well supported by the public, sections of the art community were consistently critical of the merits and indeed, the status of their work. While the Dowse had established a national weaving award to raise standards, Millar avoided craft demonstrations in the gallery, claiming he did not ‘want the gallery to become a workshop.’\footnote{McCredie, p. 171.} Under Luit Bieringa’s directorship, the Manawatu Gallery scheduled an annual exhibition from the Manawatu Pottery Society and included pottery days or weaving days for children, to run concurrently if
similar craft exhibitions were scheduled.\textsuperscript{75} However, Bieringa and Millar avoided associations between their institutions and the amateurism that they believed was endemic in society shows. Bieringa commented that the establishment of the Manawatu Art Gallery belonged to a wider picture in which 'the art societies “kept the hearth warm” in a number of towns until a professional gallery could be established.'\textsuperscript{76} In turn, Millar believed that the breaking of ties with the Hutt Art Society had been critical to founding the Dowse\textsuperscript{77}

The popularity of craft attracted damning criticisms from those seeking to raise standards in the fine arts. Wilson, reviewing the 1978 Christchurch Arts Festival Craft Exhibition in \textit{Art New Zealand}, acknowledged its overwhelming popularity, but raised serious concerns about its aesthetic quality:

\begin{quote}
The New Zealand Chapter of the World Crafts Council assembled a heterogeneous collection of objects as diverse as a dog sledge, a renaissance treble viol, weaving and woodcarving, pottery, and pancakes (well almost).... And it was popular, with crowds literally jostling for a vantage point from which to catch a glimpse of the offering. There is no doubt that the crafts appeal to the New Zealand sensibility – at what other exhibition would you encounter such a large turnout, and the buzz of a genuinely excited response? Not the muted murmur of dutiful worship in front of the high altar of a grand master hitherto unseen on these antipodean shores, but a raw gut appreciation all the way from the toes. Is the stamp of an austere colonial past so indelibly impressed upon us that we can sooner find aesthetic fulfilment in an object of greater or lesser practical application than in such ‘useless’ objects as painting or sculpture?\textsuperscript{78}
\end{quote}

Wilson’s elitist criticisms were reiterated by Hamish Keith in the \textit{Listener} in September 1978. He maintained that, apart from pottery, craft was characterised by amateurism:

\textsuperscript{75} McCredie, pp. 137, 145.
\textsuperscript{76} McCredie, p. 122.
\textsuperscript{77} McCredie, pp. 171, 252.
\textsuperscript{78} Rodney Wilson, ‘Christchurch,’ \textit{Art New Zealand}, No. 9, February–April 1978, p. 25.
In general, the present climate for most crafts is decidedly unhealthy. A recent exhibition in a South Island city provided some classic examples: a pair of hand-carved kauri boots with brass eyelets craftily inset... a Spanish galleon afloat on Spanish Main woven from hand-spun Canterbury wool... Pottery is the one craft in which some standards do seem to be applied. There is debate about why potters pursue their craft as well as a very clear and professional exposition of how they go about it... None of this seems to apply in the other main crafts, and perhaps it is time that it did. In weaving, for instance, some quite demanding technical standards have been defined, but weaving here is generally marked by an appalling sense of design and almost no clear sense of direction... Last year 44,000 New Zealanders attended formal classes in the crafts. If exhibitions like the one mentioned earlier are any measure of the way those people are being directed, it is clearly time to take stock. 

Artist and gallery technician at the CSA during the 1980s, Evan Webb, recalls that although the Society’s craft exhibitions were often of high quality, they were displayed in an environment in which this debate threatened their stature:

Craft shows were in a period when there was a conflict between art and craft, but it was also a period in which craft was well represented by the gallery. I was in awe of the degree of talent. I came from a craft background and I knew good pottery, and local woodworkers had exhibitions of extraordinary craft.

His observations make a salutary antidote to Wilson and Keith, but were destined to go largely unheard. In 1984 the Listener columnist, Brett Riley, reviewed the exhibition ‘Hand Weaving Unlimited’ and asked the question, ‘is it art?’ His conclusions reveal that the issue at the heart of the debate was, not one of the differences between arts practices, but one of professionalism:

The national Handweaving Unlimited exhibition at Christchurch’s CSA Gallery, held in the South Island for the first time since its inception in 1975, attracted 238 submissions, half of which were ultimately selected. The resulting show, the country’s premier woolcraft exhibition, illustrated the

79 Hamish Keith, ‘Craft Classes,’ The Listener, 23 September 1978, p. 29.
80 Interview, Evan Webb, 11 December 2006.
present state of development in weaving in New Zealand: the technique was generally excellent: the native material second to none.... The separation of the arts from crafts is complex and confused, and attempts by the frustrated crafts fraternity to argue away the gap have usually failed.... Only in recent years has the new crafts boom forced the issue, and the air is rife with specious arguments.... Craft becomes muddled with that trendy thing called lifestyle. Another argument is that if you take, say, a perfectly good handmade rug, which is perceived as a craft object, and pick it up off the floor and hang it on a wall it will automatically, by denying its function, gain status as an art object. More often than not it simply goes into vertical limbo.81

Riley went on to maintain that a greater degree of professionalism was required for craft to be treated as serious art. He singled out a touring exhibition of work by New Zealand craftsmen in the United States, co-curated by Peter Rule. Titled ‘Treasures from the Land,’ it included work by Cliff Whiting, Barry Brickell and Bronwynne Cornish. In fact, although there were no craft sales by amateur groups at the CSA in 1987, professional craftspeople did survive, with Steve Fulmer, Mitsuyo Matsumoto and Ross Richards holding solo shows that same year and recording sales of almost $12,000.82 Accordingly, the debate about craft as serious art during this period was won by those advocating professionalism, but even for them, economic viability was precarious after the still fairly recent ‘glory days.’

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s craft played an important role in the CSA’s programme. It addressed the needs of many new working members and engaged a wide audience, generating necessary and welcome revenue for the Society. Unfortunately, alongside longstanding criticisms of its Annual Autumn Exhibition, the CSA’s encouragement of numerous amateur craft groups further contributed to notions of the Society as a conservative and amateur organisation. The combined onslaught of attacks from the ‘fine art’ world, the politics of the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, and, at the macro level, government economic policy, saw the rapid and unquestionably sad decline of the craft phenomenon. This undoubtedly contributed to the CSA’s waning prestige.

81 Brett Riley, ‘But is it Art?’ The Listener, 4 February 1984, p. 34.
82 Exhibition sales 1978–1988, Box No. 29, CAG 1.
Despite the criticisms of its amateurism and conservatism, throughout this period the Society maintained an exhibition programme that was arguably unmatched by any public gallery in New Zealand, encompassing the emergence of post-object, feminist and conceptual art. In 1977 the CSA gallery was restricted to women only from 30 May to 3 June for the construction of the ‘Women’s Environment,’ an installation held to coincide with the ’77 Women’s Convention. Coordinated by the Christchurch Woman Artists [sic] Group, participants were invited to ‘feminise’ the gallery, with music and poetry readings, alongside painting, printmaking and sculpture by professional and amateur artists. (Plate 36) The Christchurch Woman Artists Group, which included Allie Eagle, Louise Lewis, Heather McPherson, Jackie Sullivan and Pamela Woolfe, intended the exhibition to:

facilitate women’s sharing in a non-rivalistic [sic] manner.... not as an exhibition in the usually accepted sense, where there is a differentiation between artist/spectator performer/audience, but as an encompassment [sic] of our lot as women.... We wish to convey an essentially female atmosphere i.e. we are working on how to transform a masculine piece of architecture into female terms.\(^8^4\)

The ‘Women’s Environment’ adopted the feminist ideology that had emerged in the arts in the United States and Great Britain in the early 1970s. The work of the Christchurch Woman Artists Group addressed the question raised by artists such as Judy Chicago and Miriam Shapiro; ‘What does it feel like to be a woman?’ in Womanspace Journal in 1973.\(^8^5\) The installation was intended to be non-hierarchical and non-commercial. As a group exhibition of work by professional and amateur artists, its philosophy was integral to the CSA’s principles of comprehensive support for the arts. Although the political intentions of the exhibition were anticipated by Eagle’s curation of ‘Six Women Painters’ at the McDougall Gallery in 1975,\(^8^6\) that show was more traditional in its passive relationship between the art works and audience. At the CSA, the ‘Women’s Environment’ revealed an alternative and more

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\(^8^4\) Proposal from the Christchurch Woman Artists Group, undated, Director’s Correspondence, 1965–1989, Box 55, CAG 1.
\(^8^6\) Roberts, pp. 85-86.
Plate No. 36. ‘Women’s Environment,’ CSA Gallery, 30 May-3 June 1977. This was an installation restricted to women only, held to coincide with the ’77 Women’s Convention.
innovative way of presenting art. In 1978, Eagle recalled the community spirit that the project created:

It was a place where women stayed, where we talked and danced and sang, shared, created and listened to each other. Where a large number of women connected on many levels and communicated in many ways that the patriarchal culture disallows.... All the assembled work was hung and placed as much as possible in a way that ‘better or best’ value judgements became unnecessary.... Showing non-professional and professional alongside each other was a statement of validation beyond conventional art – taste - professional standards.... There was Olivia Spencer-Bower’s water colour of an elderly woman, [Jane] Zuster’s etchings, Rhonda Bosworth’s and Jan Geary’s photographs, patchwork, crochet, sewing.\(^{87}\)

The *Press* art critic Michael Thomas also drew favourable attention to its pluralism and political intentions:

There was nothing phoney or “arty” about the exhibits-they were vital, earnest and candid. Life and art were not separated: domestic articles, children’s art works, craft objects, intimate “diaries,” and experiences scrawled on paper - all these were displayed, unedited and real - all equally valid as art.... Many artists worked in unfamiliar media and had been prepared “to go outside professional presentation” in their search for identity and in order to participate in the group effort.\(^{88}\)

The exhibition was an important influence on the development of feminist art in New Zealand. Writing in the *CSA News* in 1987, Marian Evans, who had established women’s exhibition spaces following the show, emphasised its significance:

once we’d heard about the CSA environment, images of women, by women and whether women’s imagery differed from men’s became of special interest to us.... Eventually, in early 1980, with Anna Keir, we opened the Women’s


\(^{88}\) *Press,* 11 June 1977, p. 22.
Gallery in Wellington. With the CSA environment as a model, we tried to transform the way an art gallery was organised.\footnote{Marian Evans, ‘Alternative Contexts for Art,’ CSA News, No. 134, May–July 1987, p. 6.}

The Society’s early support for such practices in 1977 is in marked contrast to the virtual absence of feminist art in New Zealand public galleries throughout the 1970s. In discussing the emergence of such institutions in his thesis, Going Public, Athol McCredie observes that ‘in a period of such strong feminist concern it is surprising so little “women’s art” was shown by public galleries…. there simply was very little work addressing feminist concerns created in New Zealand in the seventies.’\footnote{McCredie, p. 240.}

However, although Barron was pleased to support the ‘Women’s Environment’ she would not have described herself as a feminist. A letter from sculptor, Ria Bancroft, in 1979 to Barron confirms their scepticism:

\begin{quote}
Like you – I also do not – and never have – felt male-dominated – but – even if I had – I would not give them the satisfaction of letting them know! – Besides our strength lies in remaining women – female – However Nola, with you, I wish them luck and some good will come out of it all.\footnote{Bancroft to Barron, 14 May 1979, Director’s Correspondence, 1965–1989, Box 55, CAG 1.}
\end{quote}

The ‘Women’s Environment’ encouraged audience participation and the work created challenged traditional notions about the status of the art object in a gallery and the relationship that the audience established with it. This emphasis on ideas and the ephemeral nature of art - whether feminist or otherwise - was fundamental to post-object practice. In New Zealand, it was centred on artists from the Elam School of Art and the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts.\footnote{McCredie, p. 95.} It remained at the forefront of contemporary New Zealand art from the mid-1970s until the mid-1980s.\footnote{Bruce Barber, Blair French, Tony Green, Jennifer Hay and Nicholas Spill, Interventions, Christchurch: Robert McDougall Art Gallery, 2000.} Throughout this period, the CSA acted as the country’s most important venue for installation and performance art. In 1975, senior lecturer in music and director of the Electronic Music Studios at the University of Canterbury, John Cousins, in collaboration with Colleen Anstey, presented ‘Co-Active Play’ at the
CSA gallery. This was an improvisation that focused on the relationship of the artist’s body to its immediate environment,94 and was one of the first performance works in New Zealand.95 Also in 1975, expatriate and conceptual artist, Billy Apple, stripped the CSA’s Print Room gallery back to its essential form and space, removing objects and items to draw attention to the environment in which art works are exhibited and critiqued. However, although Apple’s contribution was an important early conceptual work, it was the ongoing association between the CSA and the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts that proved critical to the Society’s role as a venue for performance and installation. Senior lecturer in sculpture at the School of Fine Arts, Tom Taylor, encouraged graduates to made use of the spacious Mair gallery.96 The Society was willing to cultivate this relationship, seeking to maintain its position as the region’s leading art institution for contemporary practice. At the opening of the Annual Autumn Exhibition in 1977, vice-president Derek Hargreaves advocated the CSA’s commitment to post-object art:

we are always on the lookout for new ideas, new exhibitions... Your council has investigated the possibility of commissioning exhibitions of an avant-garde or experimental nature. Whether you call these exhibitions or performance or projects or installation they represent a new and exciting form of art which as yet we have not seen in the South Island on any sort of a scale. Exhibitions of this nature have been successful, staged in the North Island and we feel if the funds and expertise are available we should be able to experience one down here. 97

In July 1977, visiting Canadian sculptor and lecturer at the School of Fine Arts, Martín (Martie) Mendelsberg, alongside the physicist Carol Miles, constructed an installation in the Mair gallery, ‘The Plant Within/ Within the Animals Within.’ A potted cypress tree was centrally placed in a cage in the darkened gallery beneath a grid formed by a 2.5cm nylon rope. The combination of sound and theatre created an engaging environment that was well received by Press critic Michael Thomas:

95 Hay, pp. 11-12.
Things that normally occur out-of-doors in a rural setting are now happening indoors in the centre of Christchurch. A bird singing, a tree growing in the peace of the countryside – all these can be experienced inside at the CSA gallery.... The visitor enters the “environment” through a black curtain. The whole of the Main Gallery is in total darkness.... It is the first exhibition in this writer’s experience, which has used the simple Mair Gallery as the starting point for an idea. In so doing, it demonstrates the potential of a space such as this for the adventurous sculptor, and it opens up new possibilities for the future.98

Also in 1977, Allie Eagle, Anna Keir and Jane Zusters exhibited work in ‘Three Feminist Artists,’ which included a provocative and controversial installation by Eagle, Rape Trail Piece: ‘It presented a slashed mattress with an outline of a woman’s body, placed under a glass-topped table. A conglomeration of squashed egg, jelly and spaghetti oozed from a tubular shaft at the top of the piece.’99 One reviewer acknowledged the confrontational manner in which it engaged the gallery visitor:

It is an exhibition without the usual intellectual or artistic pretensions, rather a collective document on the violence of rape, a woman’s right to abortion, and the quintessence of being a female, in particular a female artist.... With this exhibition I am made abruptly aware that art can be a means of making political and social comment.100

Andrew Drummond’s performance, Crucifixion in the 1978 Christchurch Arts Festival exhibition, ‘Platforms,’ was equally innovative and certainly controversial. (Plate 37) The Festival exhibition was organised by Mendelsberg and featured contributions from fifteen invited artists, prominently sculptors; Graeme Brett, Will Collison, Paul Cullen, Bing Dawe, Neil Dawsor, Andrew Drummond, Murray Horne, Rosemary Johnson, Mendelsberg, Don Peebles, Pauline Rhodes, Graham Snowden, Nicholas Spill, Marte Szirmay and Greer Twiss. The artists were provided with a choice of three structures; a square, rectangle or cruciform on which to realise a

99 Roberts, p. 87.
100 Unidentified Newspaper, CSA scrapbook No. 4 February 1978-November 1978, Box 62, CAG 1.
ANDREW DRUMMOND

Views of an artwork using performance and a performance in a court room.

LOOKING BACK TO THE CRUCIFIXION

In 1978 when I was asked to make a work for the ‘Platforms’ exhibition organised by Martin Mendelsberg and John Cousins for the Christchurch Arts Festival show at the CSA, I remember making immediate decisions which were to become contentious in another context but generally the work was going to consist of me using my body to create a skin of rubber latex while lashed naked to the cross and to be linked to an ECG monitor which would relay my physical condition to the audience. I was hoping that by using the anxiety caused by my physical condition and ideas relating to the spirituality of the crucifixion, I could use the process of creating a skin to be dramatised on the video ECG image. This also provided the link to the second part of the work which was to be the residue, the artefact—a latex skin.

After costing the skin and shedding it I ripped the skin from my body, unhooked the ECG and left the room to prepare for my trip home to Wellington. Some days later when I was preparing to deport to Australia I was notified that the police had seized the polaroids from show at the CSA and had laid charges against the gallery for displaying offensive material. Also, and more immediate for me was that the police were about to lay charges against me for acting offensively in public place. I immediately left the country so as to fulfil my obligations in Australia and to give myself time to think this through. Surely in 1978 this couldn’t happen? Well it could and still is happening to artists who dare to challenge the status quo.

ENLIGHTENMENT IS ILLUSIVE

Canterbury Society of Arts Archives, CAG1, Box No. 11, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu.

Plate No. 37. Andrew Drummond’s Crucifixion was included in the Christchurch Arts Festival exhibition, ‘Platforms,’ (5-18 March 1978).
‘platform’ for their work. Wilson’s review in the *Listener* observed: ‘It was not a festival craft exhibition, a vast crowd-pleaser titillating the sense with richness of texture and colour. The exhibition demanded much more from those who viewed it.’ Drummond’s contribution consisted of a performance in which he entered the gallery naked and lay on a cross, wearing a gas mask. An assistant poured latex on to his body, which formed a skin that was then peeled off. Polaroid images of the performance were displayed in the gallery as part of the exhibition. Two visitors who attended complained about the artist’s nudity and the police ordered gallery staff to remove photographs of Drummond’s performance. Charges were laid against the artist for indecency that were later dismissed. The incident was indicative of the innovative nature of such work and the lack of context for appraising it in New Zealand at this time. At a meeting of the council, immediately following the incident, members were informed that the CSA might also be prosecuted and the president Derek Hargreaves responded:

> it was resolved unanimously on the motion of Mr Eaton seconded by Mr Stamers-Smith that: “The Council affirms the right of an artist to exhibit his art work in any form he considers appropriate to his intention. It is inevitable in so doing that an artist may come into conflict with the views of some members of the public.”

Sculptor Graham Snowden also made extensive use of the Mair gallery for performance-based work. In 1981 he constructed an installation to accompany music by the punk group ‘And Band’ in the Mair gallery. *Skulls* combined sound, theatre, cinematic images and news clip projections. Its commentary on military conflict and the media was enthusiastically reviewed by Coley for the *Christchurch Star*:

> On four evenings last week the CSA Gallery reverberated to the music of And Band, a trio of musicians equally at home with any of the three instruments.... the backdrop created for them by Graham Snowden and Gary Ireland packed a
solid wallop…. He hung a curtain of white plastic material 4m high and almost spanning the width of the gallery. On this were painted six large skulls in three vertical couplings of two. Between these two white translucent plastic acted as a screen on which were back-projected images of conflict, military mayhem and murder culled from news clippings and emphasised with graphic, hand-applied additions. They flashed in to the screen two at a time behind the players at a rapid clip and during the long climaxes stroboscopic lights flickered at an eye-popping pace producing with the high decibel sound an effect which for the first time brought home to me the meaning of the phrase “mind-blowing.”

The CSA’s support for these exhibitions contrasts with the wider lack of regard for performance and post-object art in the majority of public galleries. McCredie maintains that even the newly established arts institutions, The Dowse, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery and Manawatu Art Gallery preferred to encourage the work of senior artists, who worked in conventional media. These included many who were regular exhibitors at the CSA, such as Doris Lusk, Don Peebles and Michael Smither. Besides the CSA, during this period only the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in a few instances addressed performance and post-object practice.

The CSA also participated in the inaugural Australasian contemporary art exchange, ANZART. Described as the ‘biggest international art event to be held in New Zealand,’ it was conceived by the former director of the National Art Gallery in Wellington and visiting lecturer at the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts, Ian Hunter. The project brought 30 established sculpture and performance artists from Australia and New Zealand together for a series of exhibitions, workshops, lectures, performances, films and social gatherings. It was the first arts event of its kind in New Zealand with its emphasis on a concept, not just an exhibition, to advance the arts. From 17 to 29 August 1981 ANZART’s programme took place at various sites in the Arts Centre of Christchurch, the Robert McDougall Art Gallery and the CSA. It was funded by the Australian Arts Council, the Queen Elizabeth II

\[107\] Ibid.

\[108\] McCredie, pp. 169-170.

\[109\] McCredie, p. 239.

Arts Council, the Australian New Zealand Foundation and a number of commercial organisations. It aimed to establish a closer association between contemporary practice in Australia and New Zealand. The participating artists included Phil Dadson, Andrew Drummond, Bonita Ely, Dale Frank, Di ffrench, Miles Parr and Pauline Rhodes. The CSA exhibited paintings by Australian and New Zealand artists, and an installation of photographs by Steven Greenwood, kinetic sculpture by Evan Webb and a performance by Dom de Clario.111 Reviewing the year in the arts for 1981, Riley singled out ANZART as a milestone:

Ian Hunter’s ANZART landed in the last week of August like a time bomb. Its effects will be profound and long lasting, and may not even begin to be really felt for some time.... Often baffling and bizarre, ANZART brought us face to face with the leading edge of experimental art today.... Its greatest contribution was to the artists themselves. It was a great seeding. To the Australians, New Zealand was discovered.112

Contemporary sculpture and post-object art continued to make an important contribution to the CSA’s programme through the mid-1980s with Evan Webb exhibiting kinetic sculpture in the School of Fine Arts Centenary exhibition in 1982 and three kinetic works as part of the 1984 Christchurch Arts Festival.113 However, by 1985 post-object art lost momentum as it was progressively mainstreamed into film, dance and theatre,114 and with such developments it also disappeared from the Society’s exhibition programme.

The CSA’s commitment to performance and post-object art, which predominantly involved work by younger artists, did not mean that the Society had the unqualified support of arts graduates in the way that had been the norm at least until 1975. Graduates from the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts still exhibited with the Society, but they also looked outside the CSA for support, and not just through representation in newly established dealer galleries. The Christchurch Artists

112 Christchurch Star, 2 January 1982, p. 10. To a certain extent ANZART anticipated such phenomena as the Art and Industry biennial in Christchurch, established in 2002.
113 Interview, Webb, 11 December 2006.
114 Hay, p. 23.
Collective was founded by artists Michael Armstrong and Tiffany Thornley in 1986 to provide alternative exhibition spaces for the increasing number of graduates. It supported experimental, non-commercial and political art work. Participating artists included Joanna Braithwaite, Neil Frazer, Linda James, Grant Lingard and Richard Reddaway. These and other artists maintained that a need existed for alternative galleries to the CSA, the McDougall and the Brooke Gifford Gallery which were perceived to have monopolised the arts in Christchurch. Writing for the *Listener* in 1986 Riley observed:

…the exclusive exhibition triangle of public gallery, art society and one dealer gallery was too restricting for the number and energy of new artists. The commercial exigencies of the CSA and Brooke/Gifford galleries were accepted as inevitable, if a little distasteful, to artists with young idealism still intact.

However, although the CSA was considered to be part of this status quo, James recalls that it was also perceived to be less restrictive in its exhibition policies in comparison with the McDougall and the Brooke Gifford Gallery. Indeed, although the subject of criticism from some staff at the School of Arts, its inclusive exhibition’s policy found favour with many of its young contemporary graduates who continued to exhibit at the CSA because it was more pluralistic. James recalls:

[At the art school] Ted Bracey had a preference for [Richard] Diebenkorn…. [The programme] was modernist in its intentions and dogmatic. The Artists Collective reacted against this…. The CSA was much more open…. It gave people a chance to give it a go….. We rented a place in Manchester Street…. The Collective provided support for artists…. [However] the CSA did not have the social aspect. Doris Lusk did not want those things such as feminism or co-operatives.

The changing status of the Society was also revealed in other ways. Its annual working members’ exhibitions were now an object of indifference. Arts commentator

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116 Ibid.
117 Interview, Linda James, 1 December 2006.
Penny Orme recalls that ‘people were not that interested in the members’ shows. They were really only looked at if they were on with something else.’ In spite of such perceptions, just as the Society supported craft and performance art, under Barron’s directorship, the CSA maintained an unswerving commitment to its working members through an increasing number of solo exhibitions and annual group shows. The numerous amateur artists participating in the Annual Autumn Exhibition retained the support of two working members of national prominence. Olivia Spencer-Bower was CSA president from 1981 until her death in July 1982, and was succeeded by Doris Lusk who remained in the position until November 1987. Webb recalls that even though the quality of work in the annual shows was variable, it was legitimised by their presence: ‘Senior New Zealand artists made the members shows alright.’ Barron was particularly sensitive to the needs of aspiring working members. In an address to those rejected, she offered encouragement: ‘We are dealing with people in the early stages of their artistic development but you have made the effort and have been brave enough to submit – I know it takes some courage.’

However, even though Lusk and Spencer-Bower added lustre to the Autumn Exhibition, their support must be placed in the context of the continually growing number of solo and group shows taking place in the Gloucester Street gallery. While the CSA had held only twelve exhibitions from October 1966 to September 1967 in its Durham Street gallery, in the new building more than 90 were scheduled in 1978. Of these, only three were specifically for working members; the Annual Autumn Exhibition in May, the Open Members’ Exhibition in June and the Summer Members’ Exhibition in December. Inevitably, the attention paid by the Society’s council and gallery staff to the members’ shows diminished. Symptomatic of these changes was the CSA’s failure to address the kind of concerns expressed in a letter from the popular landscape artist Owen Lee to Hargreaves in March 1979. He requested better support from the council for its working members:

118 Interview, Penny Orme, 13 December 2006.
119 CSA minutes, 26 November 1980 and Director’s report, 1 July 1982.
120 CSA minutes, 8 July 1982 and 24 November 1987.
121 Interview, Webb, 11 December 2006.
122 Note by Barron, undated, Director’s Correspondence, 1977-84, Box 54, CAG 1.
I think that it would be generally agreed that the standards of an art society’s main exhibitions are of major importance. It is by these exhibitions as distinct from one-man shows that visitors judge a society. Standards can fluctuate wildly with the times. However, I feel that there are several ways by which they can be raised and maintained. 1. Invite guest exhibitors from other centres. 2. Feature the work of past members or exhibitors. On the social side I would like to suggest the idea of having a monthly members evening with supper provided at a price and a programme of interest arranged such as films and guest speakers etc. Perhaps you could put the above suggestions before the Council for consideration.

Lee’s suggestions were not adopted, yet perhaps surprisingly, during the early 1980s membership dramatically increased. In 1966 the CSA had more than 1,200 members, providing an annual income of £3,254.5.3 ($6,500). In 1979 approximately 2,000 members contributed $20,104 through annual subscriptions. However, while the growth in membership was important as evidence of the community support for the arts that the Society continued to generate, it must be noted that the revenue from subscriptions was of declining significance to the Society’s annual income. In 1975 the revenue from the sale of art works was $20,382, exceeding annual subscriptions by almost $5,500. By 1986 the difference between the two streams had greatly increased, with exhibitions now providing $94,942 and subscriptions $36,109.10. The numerous solo and thematic shows held annually at the CSA’s gallery and its diverse exhibition schedule ensured that community interest in the Society continued to be cultivated, not only through membership, but also by the growing purchases of art works by its members. This support for the arts reveals the important cultural role that the CSA continued to occupy in Canterbury throughout this period, and this despite criticisms from influential sections of the art world.

124 Owen Lee to Derek Hargreaves, 28 March 1979, Director’s Correspondence, 1965–1979, Box 55, CAG 1.
The increasing membership must also be placed in the context of a growing interest in the arts in New Zealand. Certainly, in Christchurch this was evident in the presence of dealer and artists-run galleries. At least fifteen such institutions were established in Christchurch between 1975 and 1988. In addition to the opening of the Brooke Gifford Gallery, in the mid-1970s the buildings on the former university site in Worcester Street and Rolleston Avenue were converted into the Arts Centre of Christchurch, \(^{128}\) encouraging new galleries to open. Barron expressed her concern over such competition to the CSA council in June 1978, \(^{129}\) and over the following ten years galleries in the Arts Centre included the Gingko print studio (1980), the Riki Rangi Maori Carving Centre (1985), and the Connexion Gallery (1987), which specialised in contemporary jewellery. Galleries were also established by artists, including the Arteries Gallery (1979), the James Paul Gallery (1985), the Manawa Gallery (1985), and the print studios and galleries, El Knoko (1985) and Limeworks (1985).

Wilson recalls that the flourishing Brooke Gifford Gallery encouraged these developments and argues that by breaking the CSA’s monopoly, it allowed the arts to flourish in Canterbury:

> A group of us supported Judith Gifford and Quentin [Macfarlane] setting up the Brooke Gifford. You need to think about the times. The Kelliher Art Competition was still in existence, and views of the Southern Alps still held sway. An art society was all things to all people and several of us held a view that these things needed to be separated.... The CSA exhibited a lot of indifferent stuff.... These were times of idealism and we were all inspired in different ways to lift the game. \(^{130}\)

Former Head of the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts, Ted Bracey, maintains that by the mid-1970s the CSA had assumed a quite different role from that of a traditional art society:

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128 CSA minutes, 18 July 1975.
129 Director’s Report, June 1978.
130 Interview, Rodney Wilson, 26 November 2006.
I came back to Christchurch in the mid-seventies and I saw that the CSA was holding back the dealer galleries. It had begun to hold stock of artists' work for sale. Rusty [Laidlaw and] Nola Barron... deliberately established a dealer gallery situation for the gallery and presented themselves as a dealer. Before that there had been sales at the annual exhibitions but nothing like a dealer gallery.\footnote{Interview, Bracey, 11 July 2006.}

Wilson also recalls that the need for professional dealer galleries was not merely limited to Christchurch: ‘Auckland was not much better. There was the Barry Lett, New Vision and then Denis Kohn opened up.... There was no fashion for buying contemporary art.’\footnote{Interview, Wilson, 26 November 2006.} This momentum for change was widely felt throughout the Christchurch art community. Geddes recalls: ‘The CSA was supported by membership. Dealer galleries were supported by sales. A dealer gallery only took people who they thought were good.’\footnote{Interview, Geddes, 11 December 2006.} Similar thoughts were expressed by artist, Grant Banbury, a gallery assistant at the CSA throughout this period. When he graduated from the School of Fine Arts, he exhibited at the Brooke Gifford Gallery: ‘For me, it was important to hold my honours show at the Brooke Gallery. There was definitely a change.’\footnote{Interview, Banbury, 18 December 2006.} The works of artist Tom Field were shown at the opening exhibition at the Brooke Gifford Gallery in May 1975.\footnote{Press, 27 May 1975, p. 131.} He recalls that it was an impressive space, with Macfarlane taking great care over presentation: ‘Quentin was fussy about how works were hung and the gallery compared well with all other dealer galleries in New Zealand.’\footnote{Interview, Tom Field, 1 December 2006.}

Undoubtedly, the presence of the Brooke Gifford Gallery had a significant influence on the Society’s exhibition programme. At the Annual General Meeting in 1976, Warren diplomatically welcomed the new gallery and voiced a familiar call for greater professionalism in the CSA’s activities:

\begin{quote}
The advent of the Brooke Gifford Gallery has meant that some artists who had formerly exhibited at the CSA have held their 1976 one man shows at the new
\end{quote}
gallery. This has somewhat altered the pattern of our exhibitors but we hope we might coax some artists back to the CSA. This friendly rivalry is good for art and artists in Christchurch. We must maintain and improve our standard of service to the artists and the quality of the environment for their exhibitions.137

The CSA responded by establishing a viewing room on the lower level of its gallery and employing Rona Rose as art consultant. Banbury recalls:

The selling gallery was an attempt within the facility to act as a dealer gallery. Rona Rose was put in this room, in an environment in which you could talk to people more intimately. It remained a members' space but it was trying to facilitate something that appeared to be like a dealer gallery and its success reflected well on Rona Rose.138

Barron also notes that the selling gallery's success resided in the type of work offered: 'Because we had a membership, working members could have work in the selling gallery.... They were modest paintings, purchased by locals, wanting work on their walls. Its success lay with a 'middle-band' of buyers.'139 Barron further maintains that there was never any sense of competition between the CSA, the Brooke Gifford Gallery or any subsequent dealer galleries:

What we wanted to do was promote the artists' work. We knew they would go eventually to dealer galleries, but we were a society. It was a very co-operative period. I went to Elva Bett Gallery [in Wellington] and she suggested artists to me who we might like to share between galleries. I also dealt with Peter McLeavey. It was a great era for co-operation and that was going on with the crafts as well. We all helped each other.140

Barron established productive relationships with galleries throughout New Zealand. In March 1977 she travelled to the North Island, visiting dealer galleries, public galleries and artists' studios.141 Her itinerary included the Govett-Brewster Gallery,

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138 Interview, Banbury, 18 December 2006.
139 Interview, Barron, 4 December 2006.
140 Ibid.
141 CSA minutes 14 April 1977.
New Plymouth, and discussions with Don Driver, Michael Smither and Tony Kuepfer; a visit to the Auckland City Art Gallery where she met curator Ron Brownson, the New Vision Gallery, the Auckland Society Of Arts, Nigel Brown, Jaqueline Fahey, the John Leech Gallery, Ian Scott and Len Castle; and to Wellington to visit Peter McLeavey, the Dowse Art Gallery and Evelyn Page. The visits ensured that a number of these artists exhibited at the Gloucester Street gallery.

Barron was also pleased to recommend artists who exhibited at the CSA to other galleries. However, in an era of growing professionalism this sometimes created problems. The Janne Land Gallery in Wellington refused to share commissions on the sale of work by artist Gordon Crook. A frustrated Barron wrote to Crook expressing her concern that, ‘you exhibited with the CSA long before the Ms Land was out of pigtails.’ More important however, was the competition with the Brooke Gifford Gallery which, although denied by Barron, was regarded by Wilson, Bracey and significantly, Macfarlane as representing an ideological clash. Wilson recalls:

> When [the CSA] moved to Gloucester Street [in 1968] it had a financial programme to service. It became more aggressive than previously and it made it difficult for any dealer gallery to set up. There was a fragile art market and you only needed a powerful force like the CSA to take a smaller return off an artist to make a profit.... The CSA stayed there because it was so strong. Rusty [Laidlaw] was much loved and people did not get off side with him. It was a non-professional public arts institution that was moribund [sic]. [By the mid-1970s] it had evolved into its roles and it made it difficult for anything else to happen.

Art critic and former council member, John Hurrell, recalls that Macfarlane, ‘hated the CSA’ and actively worked to undermine it. Banbury notes that the Brooke Gifford Gallery’s association with the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts.
was important, and that Wilson, Bracey and Macfarlane deliberately sought to nurture the dealer gallery in competition with the Society. Certainly, Barron felt that the CSA was increasingly marginalised from exhibiting the work of graduates and she, with little encouragement from the School of Arts, overcome this problem by offering them shows rent-free for their Diploma submission or first solo exhibition at the CSA gallery.

Like the Brooke Gifford Gallery, the establishment of the Gingko Gallery was also initiated through an association of staff at the School of Arts. In June 1980 printmaker Jule Einhorn wrote to Barron and outlined her proposal to establish a professional print studio:

The gallery will operate as a dealer gallery and resources centres... A printers’ workshop will run, where printmakers will hire the use of the facilities to make their own print editions... It has been agreed that the workshop/gallery will be administered by a management committee consisting of: Barry Cleavin – Senior Lecturer, University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts, Brett Riley – General Manager, Arts Centre of Christchurch. Tom Taylor – Senior Lecturer, University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts, Rodney Wilson – Director, Robert McDougall Art Gallery [Formerly, Lecturer in Art History at the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts].

She requested a letter of support from Barron, who invited Einhorn to consider purchasing the CSA’s printing press and to discuss the proposal further with her.

As an exclusive print studio, the Gingko gallery complemented the more general concerns for the arts that the CSA represented, and Einhorn’s forthright approach to Barron clearly reflected this. The Society lacked the specialist knowledge and resources to support a particular arts practice and its administration. This had already been highlighted in 1976 when Wilson proposed to the Society that it collaborate with the School of Fine Arts in curating a touring exhibition of contemporary art. He

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147 Interview, Banbury, 18 December 2006.
148 Interview, Barron, 4 December 2006.
149 Jule Einhorn to Nola Barron, 6 June 1980, Director’s Correspondence, 1965-1979, Box 55, CAG 1.
150 Barron to Einhorn, 9 July 1980, Director’s Correspondence, 1965-1979, CAG 1.
requested that the CSA construct purpose-built crates for art works and publish an accompanying catalogue:

If the CSA wishes to move into this type of exhibition planning, i.e. preparing shows for tour to other centres, then I would be happy to assist where I can. It will however involve the CSA in obtaining sponsorship and the technical facilities necessary to prepare, mount and assemble packing cases etc., to make the show available nationally.... I have little doubt that a formalist show looking at Mrkusich, Hotere, Peebles, Thorburn, Driver and a number of young sculptors would qualify on all counts... A period of twelve to twenty four months would be necessary to prepare and research the exhibition, prepare the manuscript and publish the book for release along with the opening of the exhibition... If the CSA Council is able to guarantee (1) assistance with the sponsorship search; (2) the provision of a skilled carpenter who would be able to prepare mounts, exhibition installation material and packing cases to my designs; and (3) an initial research fund to allow students and myself to travel, select works, collect material and photograph works for illustration in the book, I would be happy to approach Reeds and the Arts Council with a proposal for a national formalist book and exhibition initiated by the CSA in conjunction with the Art History department of the University of Canterbury.151

Although initially expressing interest,152 the CSA council decided not to proceed.153 This decision was undoubtedly due to its limited resources. Geddes recalls that in the 1970s wages were low, the staff worked long hours and there was little curatorial discrimination in selecting works for exhibition:

We were incredibly understaffed and even though it was a new building it was showing its age. The railings [for hanging art works] were like an indoor version of hanging on railings. I use to hang the three members exhibitions in a day..... Pretty well anybody who turned up with art work would have it hung.... We did not spend our time working out who would be included.... If they were sort of a professional artist they would automatically get a show.... The CSA started to look amateurish.... The Gloucester Street gallery, as an

151 Wilson to Annella MacDougall, 8 June 1976, Director's Correspondence, 1965–1979, Box 55, CAG 1.
152 CSA minutes, 13 May 1976.
exhibition space, drove the programme. As a space it had a lot of problems... The access for art works in and out of the gallery was difficult and we stored stuff in the corridor.\textsuperscript{154}

Webb also recalls that resources were limited and that the numerous exhibitions and the maintenance of the building placed considerable demands on staff:

There wasn’t an exhibition programme. People simply came in with portfolios or programmes.... It was a shoe-string operation. I would repair plant equipment and that was not untypical of running a gallery then.... Money was a problem undoubtedly.\textsuperscript{155}

Such problems were consolidated during this period as the CSA’s expenditure dramatically increased in the Robert Muldoon era of high inflation. Geddes recalls that the first oil shock in the 1970s impacted significantly on the Society’s finances.\textsuperscript{156} Between 1974 and 1975, the annual cost of repairs, heating and maintenance grew from $5,986 to $8,855, and by 1978 reached $13,708.\textsuperscript{157} Warren highlighted the impact of such expenditure at the Society’s Annual General Meeting in 1977:

I begin the year with some sober news. The Society finished the year with a financial loss, the first in many years.... the Director and Council costs rose nearly 25% from $35,791 last year to $41,793 this year.... Printing and postage rocketed up. It now costs $240 for one mailing to all members.\textsuperscript{158}

The increase in running costs was further complicated by the need for maintenance of the building with the renewal of the gallery roof, improved light and repainting of the interior throughout 1979 and 1980.\textsuperscript{159} With limited resources at her disposal, Barron’s ability to ensure that the CSA maintained a profit at the end of each financial year was remarkable. Although recording a deficit of $6,323 in her first

\textsuperscript{154} Interview, Geddes, 11 December 2006.  
\textsuperscript{155} Interview, Webb, 11 December 2006.  
\textsuperscript{156} Interview, Geddes, 11 December 2006.  
\textsuperscript{157} CSA Annual Reports, 1975 and 1978, B 001, CSA Filing Cabinet.  
\textsuperscript{159} Warren ‘President’s Report,’ Annual General Meeting, 1979 and 1980, B 001, CSA Filing Cabinet.
year as director,\(^{160}\) she worked hard to avoid such losses in her following years, and this was evident in increasing sales from the growing number of exhibitions.

Expressions of concern about the Society’s resources and its professional competence were not just limited to its council or to the local art community. In 1973 the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council had questioned the CSA’s ability to curate the survey show of New Zealand art that was to coincide with the Commonwealth Games. When the Society applied for funds towards this exhibition, QEII Arts Council director, M. T. Nicolaidi, contrasted the CSA’s proposal with professional curator Gordon Brown’s touring exhibition _New Zealand Painting 1920 – 1940_.\(^{161}\) In defence, Warren drew attention to the council’s experience:

> Our council was surprised to hear that you doubted whether the Society was capable of holding an exhibition of national quality and that we may need assistance from an expert appointed by the Arts Council…. The CSA council and its members combine the best available talent and experience in the visual arts in Canterbury. Through Professor Simpson and Tom Taylor, sculptor, and Doris Holland, painter, we call upon the skill and resources of the School of Art….. Olivia Spencer-Bower, one of New Zealand’s best woman artists, adds another dimension. The council has three architects, John Trengrove, Nicholas Kennedy and myself, all heavily involved with the visual arts and well versed in organising and managing art exhibitions. Mr. Trengrove and I can and do call upon large staffs of architects…. the CSA council is a group of professional artists, painters, sculptors, potters and architects with experience and skill, and capable of staging a first class exhibition in a first class facility. We are not a group of amateurs.\(^{162}\)

Warren’s message was clearly heeded on this occasion and the CSA did receive a grant of $3,000,\(^{163}\) but its capacity to receive such funds diminished throughout the 1980s. Partly in response to these circumstances, in 1984 the Society’s council commissioned a report from Wellington marketing consultant Glen Wiggs to review

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\(^{160}\) Warren, Annual General Meeting., 1977, B 001, CSA Filing Cabinet.
\(^{161}\) M. T. Nicolaidi to Laidlaw, 26 July 1973, Director’s Correspondence, 1965-1979, Box 55, CAG 1.
\(^{162}\) CSA to M. T. Nicolaidi, 26 July 1973, Director’s Correspondence, 1965-1979, Box 55, CAG 1.
\(^{163}\) QEII Arts Council to Laidlaw, 4 October 1973, Director’s Correspondence, 1965-1979, Box 55, CAG 1.
the CSA’s operations and recommend new approaches to funding. His report commented on the gallery’s limited resources and its need for greater specialisation. He concluded by drawing attention to the Society’s all-encompassing exhibition policy and the inappropriateness of such a strategy in the arts in the mid-1980s:

[The Society relies] too much on voluntary labour and underpaid staff.... In recent times other organisations such as the McDougall have taken over many of the exhibition activities of the CSA while private galleries have encroached upon the selling function.... Exhibitions are carried out on a scale unheard of elsewhere in New Zealand..... There is a constant demand for space with the gallery being booked out until the end of the year. With such a large number of exhibitions, the quality must therefore vary considerably.... There are several galleries but there is no distinct pattern to their use.... In all facets of commerce and industry there is a growing tendency for specialisation and sophistication.... RECOMMENDATION: That a particular image be created for each gallery to appeal to different market segments.... For decades equality in every aspect of our life has been a hallmark of the New Zealand way of life. This has in turn led to mediocrity. Over the past few years all facets of our society are shaking themselves out of the mediocre and specialising in various fields in order to attain excellence. The CSA must take advantage of this trend.... The real problem impeding the implementation of the recommendations is the lack of human resources. Additional staff should be employed or contracted.... The CSA is proceeding at a gentle pace but is not meeting the ever-changing needs of the consumer.

In principle, the CSA’s programme was increasingly out of step with the QEII Arts Council’s long-term vision for the arts. In the early 1970s the Society had achieved some success in applying for QEII Arts Council funds, as they were administered through the Association of New Zealand Arts Societies (ANZAS) and the CSA, like other art societies, made successful submissions on a regular basis. In December 1970 Laidlaw wrote to ANZAS requesting funds for the Society’s 1971 programme:

I have two occasions that will need help and enclose a copy of our balance sheet in support. The first is a Maori week (25 July – 2 August) organised by the University Maori Club and is to have their best Maori artists and craftsmen. It is, I think, a foregone conclusion that they would not manage the rent – 9 days @ $15 = $135 plus power and cleaning.... The second is the N.Z. Potters (before mentioned) who have booked 6th Sept. – 3rd Oct.... If we remitted $100 plus the sundry gallery expenses would the Association help us to the extent of $300?166

The Society was also granted assistance through ANZAS for the maintenance of its premises, receiving $3,070 in 1973 towards building extensions for storage and a classroom.167 However, a 1978 discussion paper published by the QEII Arts Council articulated a strategy that placed unprecedented emphasis on arts specialisation with the Council’s primary objective to ‘support the development of professionalism in the arts.’168 Although government funding for the arts increased dramatically, from $272,000 in 1970/71 to $2,179,000 by 1974/75, it became increasingly difficult for the CSA to benefit from this.169 The newly-formed New Zealand Art Gallery Directors’ Council (NZAGDC) in 1975 strongly advocated professional art gallery practice. It expressed a concern for issues such as ‘standardising condition reporting procedures, transporting and packing touring exhibitions, an art bank, art forgeries, and government indemnification of high value exhibitions.’170 It was chaired by a new generation of gallery professionals, including Bieringa and director of the Dowse, Jim Barr. Its dedication to raising standards ensured that it received the support of the QEII Arts Council in a way that the art societies, with their interest in the exhibition of amateur artists, simply could not hope to achieve. In the QEII Arts Council’s 1978 policy discussion paper, the Chairman of the QEII Arts Council Hamish Keith acknowledged the potential contribution that the NZAGDC could make to cultural development:

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166 Laidlaw to Constance Kirkcaldie, secretary, ANZAS 9 December 1970, Director’s Correspondence, 1965-1979, Box 55, CAG I.
167 Warren to Nicolaidi, 22 December 1972, Director’s Correspondence, 1965-1979, Box 55, CAG I.
169 McCredie, p. 88.
170 McCredie, p. 89.
The establishment of the Art Galleries Directors' Council has been of considerable assistance in rationalising the touring programme for national exhibitions. The Directors’ Council is currently drawing up its own exhibitions policy which, after discussion with the Arts Council, should clearly establish priorities for the future.171

The NZAGDC proposed that galleries should assert a greater influence on the QEII Arts Council’s administration of funds:

the committee… [should] have a much greater involvement and contact with the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council in the planning and budgeting of the exhibitions expenditure of that body…. If as a body we wish to ensure a healthy and increased exhibitions budget during the forthcoming years, we must assess our needs for the years to come and with a coordinated policy and set of proposals, present the Arts Council with our needs…. Recommendations…. That the NZAGD Council ascertains its exhibitions priorities for any forthcoming year and specifies those exhibitions it deems to need support from the Q.E. II Arts Council. - That in assessing the exhibition priorities for any one year the policies and philosophy relating to small, medium and large exhibitions which the Directors’ Council may evolve be taken into full consideration.172

Barron wrote to Bieringa that same year and informed him of her concerns regarding the difficulty of seeking funds from the QEII Arts Council and the lack of significant touring exhibitions in the CSA’s programme:

This year our gallery is almost fully booked but lacks highlights – nothing international – I guess the [Robert] McDougall [Art Gallery] has creamed off any available goodies…. The Q.E. 2 [Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council] has included us with Museums and Public Art Galleries and does not seem at all willing to cover any expenses, such as they do for dealer galleries.173

172 Exhibition sub-committee meeting, 13 April 1978, ‘New Zealand Art Gallery Directors Council Correspondence,’ Director’s Correspondence, 1977-1984, Box 54, CAG 1.
173 Barron to Luit Bieringa, 12 January 1978, Director’s Correspondence, 1965-1979, Box 55, CAG 1.
Following the annual general meeting of the ANZAS in 1979, Barron told the CSA council: 'the problem of the erosion of the role of Arts Societies and the search for a new status is common.'

Barron further wrote to Guy Ngan, director of the NZAFA in 1980, voicing her unease at the dominant position of the NZAGDC in securing central government funding:

I sat in on a brief session of the Art Gallery Directors’ Council but the ground rules for membership have altered (several times) since I last attended. There seems to be no real place for us under their terms, even as observers. I have offered my goodwill and co-operation [but]... they will gain the lion’s share of QE2 support for exhibition projects.

The CSA received a derisory grant of $200 from the QEII Art Council in 1977 towards costs for graduate exhibitions and $1,000 towards its centennial show in 1980. The QEII Arts Council clearly had no serious intention of providing regular funding to art societies. Although in 1977 Hargreaves outlined the Society’s intentions to apply to central government for funding to support the gallery’s exhibitions of conceptual and post-object art, three years later his address at the opening of the CSA’s centennial exhibition at the Robert McDougall Art Gallery revealed his frustration towards the uncooperative attitude that he felt the QEII Arts Council held towards the Society. He praised the CSA’s broad exhibition policy and criticised the QEII Arts Council’s failure to acknowledge its value:

[The CSA] has the exhibitions of a Society gallery and a dealer gallery and an exhibition centre. It has been frequently criticised because of this in attempting to cover the field too widely in a gallery area that is too big for its purposes. Indeed the view in the art bureaucracy in Wellington is just this, that the Society simply cannot afford the luxury of such a large and modern gallery on the basis of a members art society.

174 CSA minutes, 11 October 1979.
175 Barron to Guy Ngan, NZAFA, 24 November 1980, Director’s Correspondence, 1965-1979, Box 55, CAG 1.
177 Derek Hargreaves, Opening address for the Centennial CSA Exhibition at the Robert McDougall Art Gallery 1980, Derek Hargreaves, CSA File, Author’s ownership.
Like all art societies, the CSA was perceived by professionals in the metropolitan art community to be Victorian, conservative and largely amateur, inappropriate to the development of New Zealand art. McCredie observed that the new public galleries of the 1970s were established by breaking associations with the societies: ‘Both the Dowse and Govett-Brewster had headline-making conflicts with their local art societies in their first years of formation as they fought to break the hold of conservatism.’ 178 McCredie claims that the appointment of directors such as Bieringa represented, ‘a shift from the rule of the amateur to that of the professional. Art societies, honorary curators and other volunteers, custodians, and committees or boards of control all gave up, willingly or not, their control over the country’s art galleries to professional staff.’ 179 Sometimes there were misunderstandings between the two cultures, which in an earlier era would not have arisen. In 1977 the CSA sought to recover losses from a retrospective exhibition of the deceased expatriate sculptor, John Panting that had been toured by the QEII Arts Council. The exhibition had occupied the three floors of the Gloucester Street gallery and although an important retrospective, it had received little public interest. Barron wrote to the QEII Arts Council:

this was not a popular exhibition with the general public... we find ourselves financially embarrassed by the loss that we have incurred... $2019.40... We consider that the Arts Council should go some way to recompense us for this sizeable loss. It seems reasonable that the Arts Council as a matter of principle should not in itself cause expense to participating art bodies who co-operate in this way. 180

Unfortunately, because the Society’s request was retrospective, it did not meet the grant criteria and was turned down, 181 although the CSA was at least successful in its application to the Internal Affairs Department, receiving $13,000 in 1979 to pay off
its remaining mortgage prior to its centenary year in 1980. Even though the CSA provided significant support for post-object practice, the QEII Arts Council, which enshrined a commitment to contemporary art, remained essentially unresponsive to its requests. Following a meeting with its members, Barron reported:

I spoke to James Mack and Michael Volkerling regarding funding for gallery space for installation/performance works/ post object projects. The initial reaction was “the CSA. is hoist on its own petard, it has too large a space and now you want funding to prop it up.” I explained that we had no trouble in filling gallery space but wished to present important work that is being done which does not have any hope of supporting our actual costs of rental and presentation.

These sentiments were reiterated in 1983 in discussions that Barron had with Sir Michael Fowler.

Following the invitation by the Arts Council we put forward a letter stating the CSA case for funding. Mrs Holland [Lusk], myself and Evan Webb attended an Arts Council meeting to discuss funding for the visual arts. Members of the Arts Council executive visited the gallery on 18 August, each was given information about the operation of the Gallery, and a copy of the policy change submitted to the Chairman. At a subsequent short meeting with Sir Michael Fowler a very frank discussion of the problem facing the CSA took place. His opening remark – “Why should we fund fat cats like you?”

In 1984 discussions between Barron and the advisor to the Arts Council, John McCormack, raised similar issues. A clearly exasperated Barron recorded:

At a meeting with John McCormack advisory officer of the Arts Council I spoke to him in general terms about funding for a specific project – possibly a Don Driver show and assistance with freight for artists outside of Christchurch.

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182 AGM, CSA minutes, 28 November 1978.
183 Director’s report, undated (c.1980), Director’s Correspondence, 1977-1984, Box 54, CAG 1.
184 Director’s report, 11 August 1983, Director’s Correspondence, 1977-1984, Box 54, CAG 1.
He was adamant that it was not Council policy to fund the Society because of our membership support. I have tried to have this clarified or changed over seven years.... We have co-operated in several Arts Council exhibitions and projects, seldom to our comfort and never fully remunerated, and continue to be treated disdainfully from the Chairman down. I am appalled at their attitude, whether it is worth trying to change it by meeting with the Minister for the Arts, the Arts Council Chairman and Director and letters to the Regional Delegates is at issue.185

To make matters worse for Barron, the QEII Arts Council appeared perfectly ready to provide funding to private enterprise dealer galleries that were exhibiting the work of emerging local artists. In August 1983 Barron summarised the evident double standards that prevailed and the accompanying dilemma that the CSA council faced:

One area of funding that is not available to us, because we have membership support, is that given to dealer galleries who might expect about $2,000 p.a. or $200 per show to assist with freight, printing, and promotion. I suggest we should discuss this and make a submission for support for certain out of town artists to assist them in presenting work in Christchurch or for particular artists to present innovative but not saleable exhibitions.186

Although the development of the free market had been a key economic policy of the 1984 Labour Government that had, however unintentionally, devastated the local craft industry, contemporary fine art was protected under the QEII Arts Council’s strategies. Wilson recalls that the funding made available to dealer galleries in the 1980s ensured that they would survive and that artists could work fulltime:

The QEII Arts Council did provide funding to dealer galleries. It wanted artists to live off their wages and also to see dealer galleries surviving and making a decent income... Art societies were perceived as being in the way of developing the arts, and Christchurch held an excellent example of this. There was only one dealer gallery and they could no: exist with the CSA in its

185 Director’s report, 6 August 1984, CSA minutes, 9 August 1984.
186 Director’s report, 3 August 1983, Director’s Correspondence, 1977-1984, Box 55, CAG 1.
monopoly role. The Society had intruded into a dealer role, yet it was also a not for profit organisation.\textsuperscript{187}

A review of an exhibition at the Brooke Gifford Gallery by emerging artist Tracey Wilson in \textit{Art New Zealand} in 1983 acknowledged the standalone value of such funding. Art critic, and soon to be dealer, Jonathan Smart, wrote fulsomely: ‘It was excellent to see the Brooke/Gifford Gallery encouraging young talent, with the help of an Arts Council grant and careful chronology (immediately) after a successful William Sutton exhibition.’\textsuperscript{188}

The perception that art societies were amateur and conservative institutions that only served to limit the development of the country’s art had been articulated in three recently-published survey catalogues by Gordon Brown of New Zealand art. Handsomely funded by the QEII Arts Council, the publications accompanied touring exhibitions that travelled to the main centres in New Zealand. Brown stressed the limitations of the art societies’ contribution to the fine arts, and the effect of this influential writer was to further diminish their status in the eyes of arts professionals and galleries throughout the country. While his catalogues are invaluable for art history, he conspicuously failed to recognise the uniqueness of the CSA and the inappropriateness of stereotyping it as conservative.\textsuperscript{189}

As CSA director, Barron was aware of the challenges that such perceptions created. In 1980 she had suggested to the council that they needed to address the future role of the CSA:

as inroads were being made into its present function by dealer and new galleries…. An experimental gallery funded by QE II, SRAC, [Southern Regional Arts Council] could be instituted with the object of improving sales, and making such space self supporting.\textsuperscript{190}

\textsuperscript{187} Interview, Wilson, 26 November 2006.
\textsuperscript{188} Jonathan Smart, ‘Christchurch,’ \textit{Art New Zealand}, No. 35, Winter 1985, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{190} CSA minutes, 10 July 1980.
The CSA council paid little attention to Barron’s concerns. This lack of response reflected something of the council’s ongoing perception of its authority and influence in the arts, as well the consequences of significant changes in art management and administration that it was inevitably incapable of escaping.

Although the CSA council recognised the need for professionalism in its activities, this was never fully resolved. Warren had acknowledged the importance of professional practice following the success of Barron’s Fine Craft Exhibition and the opening of the Brooke Gifford Gallery, yet the Society cheerfully, and sincerely continued to maintain a broad range of exhibitions and aesthetics. Barron may have argued for establishing a government funded contemporary exhibition space in 1980, but ultimately she remained committed to the CSA’s pluralistic policies in displaying the work of amateur and professional artists in its annual programmes. The opening of numerous galleries in Christchurch between 1975 and 1988 also failed to challenge the CSA council’s essential outlook. Significant changes to the gallery’s administration and additional resources would have been required to alter an inclusive ideology nurtured by the Society that did not sit comfortably with a professionalism that took a more elitist view of arts practice. The CSA’s more general and comprehensive commitment to the arts had been fundamental to its success throughout the late 1950s and, even more so in the 1960s, when its membership increased, providing necessary revenue just as its role expanded as the dominant authority in the arts in Canterbury. Perhaps this very success had led to complacency on the part of its council. The continuing embodiment of such values is hardly surprising, and remained fundamental to the CSA’s director and its successive presidents, Warren, Hargreaves, Spencer-Bower and Lusk.

It should also be noted however, that, although the Society was criticised for its support of amateur and craft exhibitions by those who advocated professionalism in the arts, many of these shows encouraged new audiences. The CSA shared this commitment to community involvement in its programmes with the developing arts professionalism evident in curatorial practices at The Dowse, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery and the Manawatu Art Gallery. This was certainly evident in the Society’s growing membership during this period. Audiences were exposed to new arts
experiences through the juxtaposition of amateur and professional, and conservative and avant-garde aesthetic exhibitions and installations, all within a single institution. The Society’s broad support for the arts also ensured that contemporary practice was nurtured through the participation of such groups as the Christchurch Artists’ Collective. This suggests that in spite of the QEII Arts Council’s - and Wilson’s and Bracey’s - ambitions for greater professionalism, such intentions did not always fulfil the needs of the entire professional art community.

The CSA’s support for a range of arts practices inevitably contrasted with the more selective exhibition policies evident in the newly-established dealer galleries. Indeed, the Society’s capacity to successfully occupy a more catholic position brought it increasingly into conflict with the agendas of the more ‘professional’ art world that began to emerge by the late 1970s. Despite – or perhaps because of – the CSA’s support for contemporary art, it faced increasingly difficult challenges in securing funding from a fundamentally unsympathetic QEII Arts Council. Although in 1977 Hargreaves had revealed the CSA’s intentions to encourage the presentation of conceptual art, which it went on to do, it achieved this without much assistance from this government agency. While the CSA’s programme included works by such state-of-the-arts figures as Apple, Cousins, Drummond, Mendelsberg and Webb, the QEII Arts Council generally failed to acknowledge the contribution the Society made to such practice. This response reveals the extent to which supposedly conservative, amateur and, in Fowler’s inimitable words, ‘fat-cat’ art societies throughout the country were held in disdain by the ‘movers and shakers’ of the art community. Perhaps in other centres, this was at least partially deserved, but an examination of the CSA’s funding and exhibition programme over this period would seem to show that it received rough justice.

In retrospect, the QEII Arts Council probably did not need to cut the art societies down to size. In Christchurch, the growing number of dealer galleries, the establishment of the Arts Centre of Christchurch, ANZART, the Gingko Gallery and the Christchurch Artists’ Collective, all provided a more complex and specialist arts practice that inevitably challenged the CSA’s authority. It is also evident that some of the new generation of art professionals who sought to undermine the CSA’s authority had earlier been the beneficiaries of it. Although Bracey claimed that when
the Gloucester Street gallery opened, the Society assumed a new and more aggressive role as a dealer gallery, such comments ignore the way in which it had served throughout the 1960s such artists as himself, Coey, Macfarlane; and shortly before them, Keith and Brown. The CSA’s dominant status in the late 1970s was the inevitable outcome of the leading role it had adopted over the previous twenty years in developing the kind of professionalism that Bracey and Wilson now both wished to channel through dealer and public galleries.

For sure, in a period in which a belated and necessary arts professionalism emerged in New Zealand, the CSA maintained roles that were ambiguous, amateurish and even contradictory. However, this must be qualified by the continued participation of professional artists in its exhibition programme. The question of the extent to which the CSA was genuinely conservative and amateur is, not perhaps, a useful or productive line of discussion, even if it was frequently articulated. The reality was much more complex. The CSA’s active exhibition schedule ensured that wider public interest in contemporary art was cultivated as never before. The Society’s audiences and members were introduced to ever more challenging and sophisticated aesthetics and ideas. In 1986, the year of Barron’s departure as director, the CSA still occupied a pivotal cultural role in the arts in Canterbury. Unfortunately, in the years that followed, her not unimpressive legacy would be comprehensively undermined and the Society’s very existence threatened.
When Doris Holland (Lusk) gave in her notice as CSA president in July 1987, her resignation was the last instance in which a senior practitioner at the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts occupied a leading role on the Society’s council.1 Holland taught at the School of Art from 1966 until 1981, and had long maintained an active participation in CSA activities, initially as a working member from 1943 and later as a councillor from 1958.2 In addition, in 1970 she received the CSA Guthrey Travel Award.3 This long association between the Society and the School of Art had also been shared by many of her predecessors who occupied important positions in both institutions, and had ensured that Canterbury retained national prominence in the fine arts in New Zealand for close to a century. Indeed, a measure of its importance was frequently evident in both the praise and the criticisms accorded to the CSA council and the School of Art staff between the 1880s and the 1950s. In 1899, for instance, the Lyttelton Times was pleased to commend the Society for introducing a competition for medals to raise the standard of student work in the CSA’s annual exhibitions,4 yet in 1912 the Society’s hanging committee was publicly criticised as ‘the little clique,’ whose bias favoured staff and students from Canterbury College School of Art (CCSA).5 Thirty-seven years later, at the height of the ‘Pleasure Garden Incident,’ CSA council member Rene Lonsdale described the Society as ‘dominated by teachers and former teachers of the School of Art.... Some higher educational and independent authority was needed to break that vicious circle.’6 Although the controversy surrounding Frances Hodgkins’s modernist works challenged the collective authority of the Society and the School of Art, the relationship survived and continued to be important to both organisations for some

1 CSA minutes, 9 July 1987, and Annual General Meeting 23 November 1983. Holland had been appointed president in 1983.
3 CSA minutes, Annual General Meeting, 18 November 1970.
4 Lyttelton Times, 6 May 1899, p. 2.
5 Press, 31 August 1912, p. 5. The CCSA was renamed Canterbury University College of Art in 1950 and became the University of Canterbury School of Art in 1957, Canterbury University College of Art Prospectus 1950, Christchurch: Canterbury University College 1950 and http://www.artschool125.co.nz/SelectiveChronology/1950_1960/#1959. In 1961 it is listed for the first time in the Christchurch phone directory as the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts.
years. John Simpson recalls that when he took up his teaching position at the School of Art in 1959 his senior colleagues, (who included Colin Lovell-Smith, W. A. Sutton and Russell Clark), continued to dominate the CSA council. He stressed: the ‘Pleasure Garden’ incident had changed nothing.\(^7\) Even in 1973, the affiliation between the two institutions proved persuasive when the CSA council sought funding from the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council for a survey exhibition of New Zealand art. President Miles Warren highlighted the Society’s status by drawing attention to the presence of School of Art staff within its ranks, singling out Simpson, Tom Taylor and Lusk as collectively representing the ‘best available talent and experience in the visual arts in Canterbury.'\(^8\) However, between 1975 and 1980 this long-standing and close working relationship ended. Holland’s retirement simply represented the last symbolic act of its demise. What had established this unique and longstanding affiliation and what form did it take? How important was it to the development of the arts in Canterbury and what led to its passing?

Even prior to the establishment of the CSA and the CCSA, it was evident to the founding fathers of Canterbury that such cultural institutions would wholly complement one another. In fact, the Canterbury Association’s plans in 1850 for education institutions of higher learning included the fine arts and tuition in ‘Model, Landscape, and Figure Drawing,’\(^9\) and as early as 1863 a notice appeared in the Lyttelton Times announcing the concurrent establishment of an art society, a school of design and an art gallery.\(^10\) The founding committee included the future CSA president, Henry John Tancred, who also occupied an important role in the establishment of the principal educational and cultural institutions in Christchurch from 1870 onwards. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that the CSA and the School of Art were established within two years of one another and were perceived to be corresponding cultural and educational institutions.

The plans by the Governors of Canterbury College for an art school in Christchurch in 1879 had also been prompted by the example of the Dunedin art school which had

\(^7\) Interview, John Simpson, 14 November 2007.
\(^8\) CSA to M. T. Nicolaidi, QEII Arts Council, 26 July 1973, Director’s Correspondence.
\(^9\) R. R. Laidlaw and Barron. 1965–1979, Box 55, CAG1 Christchurch Art Gallery Library.
\(^{10}\) Lyttelton Times; 25 March 1863, p. 6.
opened in 1870, and concerns that ‘Otago might steal yet another march on Canterbury similar to its victories in the field of medicine (1874) and mining (1879). When Christchurch Girls High School moved from its premises on the corner of Rolleston Avenue and Hereford Street to Armagh Street, the vacated building became the residence for the CCSA, opening on 1 March 1882. The conditions of appointment for an art master stated that the successful applicant must hold a certificate from the Science and Art Department at South Kensington and be able to teach ‘Freehand Drawing and Shading from Copies and from the Round, and Architectural Drawing, Practical and Solid Geometry, Modelling in Clay, and Painting in Monochrome.’ The successful applicant, David Blair, had attended the Birkenhead School of Art and had been Examiner for Art at South Kensington in 1880. No doubt his successful application for the CCSA position reflected his background in the application of art to industry. The Birkenhead School of Art was privately funded by the local MP John Laird, who expressed a need for art education to ‘reach the whole body of the artisan class.’ Laird stressed that English artisans should be highly skilled to compete with ‘fellow workmen’ in the United Kingdom and on the Continent. Underlying teaching at CCSA was the South Kensington system of drawing, which was fundamental to art education in Britain. Blair’s prospectus reflected this programme, stating that:

The work carried on in this school has for its objects the systematic study of practical Art and its scientific principles, with a view to developing the application of Art to the requirements of Trade and Manufactures, together with the training of Art Masters and Mistresses. It is similar to that of Art Schools under the Art Department of the Committee of Council of Education, South Kensington, London.

14 Chalmers, p. 112.
15 Ibid.
16 Chalmers, pp. 111-112.
17 Chalmers, p. 112.
19 Prospectus: School of Art, Christchurch: Canterbury College School of Art, 1882, p. 7.
However, equally important was a belief that the work of English tradesmen should attain 'right perception of beauty and the picturesque.'

This ideology complemented the educational principles of Tancred and educational institutions established prior to the CSA such as the Philosophical Institute. Following this precedent, the CCSA and the Society would both seek to enrich the community through the fine arts.

Blair was elected a working member of the CSA in December 1881, to its council on 25 May 1882 and secretary in September that year. It was immediately recognised that a close relationship between the two institutions would benefit the arts. In February 1882 the *Lyttelton Times* applauded Blair’s influence:

> It is some time now since we expressed the conviction in our leading column that we should be able to congratulate the Hon Secretary of the Canterbury Society of Arts, Mr Blair, on having entered upon a very auspicious reign. How the reality has bettered all possible expectation, will be best entertained by a visit on the part of those who remember last year’s exhibition…. the whole standard of the works on view is very much higher than has hitherto been the case.

Blair himself was also pleased to acknowledge this successful relationship. His annual report for the CCSA in 1884 observed:

> To show that the School of Art is already making itself felt in art work, I may mention that in the list of working members of the Canterbury Society of Arts twenty-four out of a total of forty-seven members have been or are connected with the School of Art; several of these owe their art training wholly to our influence.

His comments also reflected a *Lyttelton Times* editorial, which congratulated the CSA for its support of senior artists and students: 'Not only does it encourage our professional artists of standing, but it also holds out the same inducements to those of

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20 Ibid.
21 CSA minutes, 12 December 1881, 5 May 1882 and 18 September 1882.
22 *Lyttelton Times*, 27 February 1883, p. 6.
the younger generations who have received their artistic training here in Christchurch.24

Blair remained on the Society’s council until 1887,25 and was responsible for locating suitable premises for its exhibitions and assessing the ‘artistic ability’ of potential working members. He was appointed to the hanging committee to choose works for the annual exhibitions in 1885 and 1886,26 and was also on the selection committee for works for the Industrial Exhibition in Wellington in 1885.27 He lobbied for incentives for the CCSA’s student participation in the Society’s exhibitions, proposing the establishment of silver medals, awarded in a number of categories for working members under the age of 25. These consisted of ‘the best figure picture from the life. For the best landscape from nature. For the best design in Architecture. For the best still-life study... and for the best decorative design in monochrome, colour.’28

How did this association between the local art society and art school compare with those in the other main centres? The Otago School of Art (OSA) was opened in February 1870 and the Otago Society of Artists was established five years later. Art master, David Con Hutton, attracted high attendances at the OSA, with evening classes for ‘artisans’ attended by 157 students in 1877.29 Like that at the Canterbury art school, Hutton’s programme emphasised the application of art to industry, with lessons in ‘drawing in pencil, chalk, and water colour, and oil painting.’30 In 1877 the OSA also received support from the Otago Society of Arts with a prize awarded for the ‘best landscape by any student at the school.’31 However, although a capable

24 *Lyttelton Times*, 10 April 1884, p. 4.
25 CSA minutes, Annual General Meeting 18 September 1882 and 6 April 1887. Blair was arrested, but not convicted of indecent exposure in Hagley Park in October 1885. He retained his position on the CSA council for a further year, but the need to replace him was recorded in the minutes, 6 April 1887. See also Chalmers, p. 114.
26 CSA minutes, Annual report 1881-82, 20 December 1882, 1 November 1883, 9 February 1885, 7 June 1885 and 4 February 1886.
27 CSA minutes 12 May 1885.
30 Miller, p. 3.
31 Ibid.
teacher, Hutton was 'little regarded as a painter,' and did not achieve the level of respect that was so publicly accorded to Blair. In addition, the predominant influence of William Mathew Hodgkins on the Dunedin art society must have outweighed any impact that Hutton made at the OSA. Although initially the school grew rapidly, a financial depression in 1883 meant that staff and classes were reduced. Unlike Canterbury's art school, it seemed to lose its original momentum. Even though artists such as Girolamo Nerli and A. W. Walsh made an important contribution as teachers at Otago, student work displayed at the Christchurch International Exhibition in 1906 was criticised as lagging behind that produced at Canterbury College, Elam School of Art and the Wellington Technical School. Although capable and hard working, Hutton may have also been struggling to keep up with modern ideas in art. In contrast, in Canterbury, the proximity in dates between the establishment of the art society and art school, and the shared vision that each institution and its representatives held, ensured a more successful relationship.

In Auckland, the Elam School of Art and Design was founded following a bequest by John Edward Elam in 1889, twenty years after the Auckland Society of Artists (ASA) was established. Dominated by professional artists and painters, the ASA’s reformation in 1880 led to a wider regard for all branches of the arts and a greater emphasis upon education. This might suggest that the Auckland Society would later encourage closer associations with the Elam School. Certainly, the appointment of director Edward William Payton in 1890 saw the establishment of a teaching programme ideally suited to the ASA’s principles. It was based on ‘good standards in drawing and painting in the Royal College tradition’. However, in the early 1900s, concerns were expressed about the quality of tuition and the lack of promising artists coming from the School: ‘Under the surface there were rumblings about the Elam School of Art and the ineptitude of the many private teachers of art.’ In 1906 the

33 This is surprising as there is no listing in the catalogues from 1882 to 1887 of Blair showing his work at any of the CSA’s annual exhibitions.
34 Entwisle, p. 20.
37 Brown, p. 19.
Auckland Star lamented that ‘Only a certain level is apparently to be reached by the teachers... [who] are really unable to help forward a pupil who might rise to higher things aided by hints which, unfortunately, the teacher is not in a position to give.’

The twenty-year gap between the founding of the ASA and the Elam School, alongside questions about the quality of its teaching programme, must have hindered the kind of reciprocity between institutions that was evident in Canterbury.

In Wellington, the School of Design was opened in April 1886 on a ‘barn-like top floor of an insurance building.’ Art master Arthur Riley had graduated from the South Kensington School of Art and, like the CCSA, the School provided instruction in ‘oil and watercolour painting, modelling and casting, wood and stone carving, house decoration and paperhanging.’ Riley also served on the council of the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts (NZAFA) from 1888 to 1893. In August 1891 the Design School moved to Mercer Street and changed its name to the Wellington Technical School. In addition, Scottish immigrant and artist James Nairn was appointed by Riley in 1891 to teach life drawing. His influence on the arts in Wellington was characterised by an active working relationship with the NZAFA. Nairn was elected a council member and vice-president, and worked to raise artistic standards through teaching and the establishment of the Wellington Art Club in 1892. This met regularly in the Academy’s rooms, holding its first annual exhibition at the NZAFA in July 1893. Although it has been maintained that the relationship between Nairn and the NZAFA was ‘stormy,’ he remained active in the Academy until his premature death in 1904. By 1910 however, the NZAFA was operating ‘on a shoe-string,’ incurring a loss of £56.19s.4d that year. Increasingly, its needs depended on assistance from central government, evident in its plans to act as a repository for a

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38 Auckland Star, 23 May 1906, p. 6.
42 Kay and Eden, pp. 32, 41.
44 Brown and Keith, p. 85.
45 Kay and Eden, p. 32.
46 Kay and Eden, p. 53.
national collection and establish a national art gallery. Unlike the situation in Canterbury, the NZAFA’s commitment to national representation of the arts diverted its attention from the concerns of training and exhibiting the work of local artists, which remained central to the shared purposes of the CSA and the CCSA. By 1889 CSA president, Richard Beetham, claimed that the Society and the CCSA held a single vision for the arts:

The School of Art and this Society ought to be, so to speak, twin institutions.
Both are doing good work in the direction of elevating and purifying our appreciation of the truthful and the beautiful in Nature.

The infrastructure for this successful relationship was put in place within the first seven years of Blair’s arrival in Christchurch and by the early 1920s had led to the region’s dominance in painting in New Zealand. The early influence of the CCSA’s staff on the CSA council, the establishment of an awards system for student work in 1888, the opening of the Armagh Street gallery in 1890, the clearing of debt on the mortgage on the Durham Street extensions in the early 1900s, and the significant purchase of local artists work, all assisted their ambitions. When CSA president R. D. Thomas opened the 1902 annual exhibition, his optimistic note reflected the confidence of both institutions:

At the present time the Society was in the happy position of owning the land, the Art Gallery, and the little collection of pictures, absolutely free of any debt what ever (Applause)…. New Zealand was a new country, which, from its natural characteristics, ought to produce as good a School of Art as there had ever been in the world.

Blair’s successor, George Elliott, further consolidated this association through his advocacy of the arts and crafts movement. Prior to coming to New Zealand, Elliott had been an art master at South Kensington. He was head of the CCSA from 1886 to 1905. His teaching emphasised the utilitarian nature of the arts and the technical

47 Kay and Eden, pp. 55, 71. The NZAFA promoted a major exhibition of work from the Royal Academy in Wellington in 1912, intending to purchase British art works for a national collection. It played a major role in establishing the National Art Gallery in 1936.
48 Lyttelton Times, 11 April 1889, p. 5.
49 Press, 8 April 1902, p. 2.
50 Calhoun, p. 22.
needs of tradesmen. However, this commitment to training for industry also acknowledged William Morris’s philosophies. The fine arts were nurtured by the CCSA through the attention given to domestic furnishing and ‘craft design for personal pleasure.’ The staff at the School of Art, among them Samuel Hurst-Seager, who taught architecture, decorative design, wood carving and manual training, and Charles Kidson, who taught drawing, geometry, perspective, modelling and casting, and stone carving, had first-hand knowledge and experience of the arts and crafts movement. This informed their teaching and influence on the CSA council. In 1896 Elliott announced the establishment of a design award by the Society and emphasised that the principles of the arts and crafts movement should be central to the CSA’s support for the arts. He stated that:

“...the scope of the annual exhibition of the Society of Arts should be enlarged, so as to include other branches of art work as well as pictures.”... [It] will be seen that the aim of the Art Society is to foster and encourage the whole range of those human industries which tend in any way to beautify our environment as well as to create and gratify a love for those higher branches of art work included under the term of “fine art.” In order to emphasise this the Council has offered a medal for the best decorative design, based on New Zealand flora.

By 1899 the Society’s president, E. C. J. Stevens, was pleased to announce at the annual exhibition that ‘Among the new features were specimens of industrial art, porcelain and statuettes which would be of great interest to students. It was also the duty of the Society to encourage rising students by giving medals and other prizes.’ Although the CSA’s annual exhibitions were dominated by painting, increasingly the Society’s council allocated space for exhibiting arts and crafts. Both institutions emphasised the movement’s capacity to attain the highest expression of the aims of humanity. At the opening of the 1905 CCSA exhibition, the Chairman of the CCSA C. Lewis commented that:

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51 Calhoun, p. 10.
52 Calhoun, pp. 22-24.
53 Press, 16 April 1896, p. 5
54 Lyttelton Times, 19 April 1899, p. 2.
... much as he valued the utilitarian aspect of the school, [he] conceived that it had higher work than that. The aim of a School of Art, he took it, was to inculcate into its students a love for the beautiful, and a capacity to find and enjoy the beautiful, where others not similarly trained could not. That he believed to be the true aim of an Art School. Mr. Elliott, the headmaster of the school... found that the attention paid by students to art as applied to painting was decreasing, but greater interest was taken in art as applied to other things than painting, such as carving and stencil work. While he recognised the importance of the school from the utilitarian point of view, he would call attention to its refining and elevating influences, especially as applied to the homes of the people, and, as far as possible, the school should inspire the love of art for its own sake among the people.55

Elliott’s successor, Robert Herdman-Smith (head of the CCSA from 1905 to 1917), had attended Liverpool and Manchester Art Schools, as well as the Royal College of Art. He informed the Press in January 1906 that the School of Art’s programme would strengthen the arts and crafts movement in Canterbury even further:

A special Life class is to be formed for the purpose of helping applied art students by giving them advantages of working in various mediums, the study of costumes and the arrangement of drapery, and the use of the figure to illustrate numerous subjects to fill various decorative spaces. Several practical art crafts are to be added to the craft section of the school, such as cut-tooled and embossed leather work for bookbinding, upholstery, and various leather articles, gesso, or relief-painting for the decoration of furniture.56

Herdman-Smith’s appointment saw increasing interest in such practices as he sought to build student numbers through the founding of an Arts and Crafts Guild, which included lectures and demonstrations on landscape, printing and caricature. By June 1906 it registered over one hundred members.57 When the 1906-07 New Zealand International Exhibition opened in Hagley Park, Herdman-Smith’s Arts and Crafts Guild was a visible influence. The Exhibition contained the ‘best collection of British

55 Press, 15 February 1905, p. 4.
57 Press, 2 June 1906, p. 2.
Arts & Crafts ever seen outside Britain,\textsuperscript{58} contributing to the wider influence of the movement in New Zealand, and extending its presence in the annual CSA exhibitions. Herdman-Smith’s Guild decorated the hall corner at the 1906 Exhibition: ‘In this cozy corner of the Canterbury School the most remarkable feature was a large corner seat in brown oiled wood, decorated with carved panels, and with beautifully designed beaten-copper panels let in around the top of the woodwork.’\textsuperscript{59} Following the International Exhibition, the CSA’s annual shows included an even greater presence of arts and crafts work. In March 1908 the \textit{Press} review observed that:

\begin{quote}
whilst last year there were only eighteen exhibits in this class, this year there are over one hundred. The larger portion of these comprise specimens of the latest development of art industry in the shape of china painting.\textsuperscript{60}
\end{quote}

No doubt persuaded by Seager and Frederick Gurnsey, the arts and crafts movement became an important aspect of the CSA’s education programme.\textsuperscript{61} In June 1911 the Society’s council formed an arts and crafts subcommittee made up of the president, William Reece, Ronald Proctor, Gurnsey, James Jamieson and Seager.\textsuperscript{62} A report from the committee recommended that the CSA introduce lectures to coincide with exhibitions and awards.\textsuperscript{63} Trade councils and employers associations were made aware of these shows and were invited to attend.\textsuperscript{64} The 1912 exhibition included thirty-minute lectures by staff from the School of Art comprising:

\begin{quote}
Mr. Herdman Smith “Designing Little things of everyday Life.” Mr. Hurst Seager Crafts in relation to architecture. Mr. Gurnsey Revival of Arts Crafts.
Messrs Gurnsey Demonstration of modeling. Mr. Howell The training of the Craftsman.\textsuperscript{65}
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{58}{Calhoun, p. 8.}
\footnotetext{59}{Calhoun, pp. 35-36.}
\footnotetext{60}{\textit{Press}, 20 March 1908, p. 7}
\footnotetext{61}{Mark Stocker, \textit{Angels and Rose. The Art of Frederick George Gurnsey}, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 1997, pp. 20-31. Stocker notes the important influence that Gurnsey’s teaching had on arts and craft at the School of Art.}
\footnotetext{62}{CSA minutes, 6 June 1911.}
\footnotetext{63}{\textit{Ibid}.}
\footnotetext{64}{CSA minutes, 9 July 1912.}
\footnotetext{65}{CSA minutes, 20 August 1912.}
\end{footnotes}
In 1913 Seager organised the largest arts and crafts exhibition that the Society had ever held. The CSA’s minutes document the invaluable contribution made by the CCSA staff:

Mr. Herdman-Smith has promised a working exhibit from the school of art.... Advertising designs. Mr. Booth reported that he had some English Posters which he would be prepared to loan to the society. Process work and sketches. His students would also exhibit some posters etc and he had arranged with a firm to send an exhibit. Etching. Mr. Wallwork stated that he had arranged with his students to give an exhibition of etchings and that they will work a scheme for interior decorations. Sketch models. Gurnsey reported that the school of art students were now preparing sketch models for the exhibition. Beaten copper and wood carving. The school of art would send exhibits in both these classes. Decorative plaster and leatherwork.... The students of the school would provide a working exhibit in this section (leatherwork). Jewellery and silversmith. Several students would exhibit in this class and Mr Gurnsey had seen the manager of Petersons with a view to their sending an exhibit.... Stenciled designs and fabrics. Gurnsey stated that the director of the school of art would like space 20 x 12 for the purpose of carrying out the school’s scheme. 66

Such collaboration between the Society and the CCSA made tangible the way in which both institutions could best collectively advance the arts in Canterbury. However, it must be noted that following the opening of the Technical College in 1907, the CCSA began to lose students to this new institution. ‘By 1911, the technical college had three times more students than the CCSA. Design for manufacturing ends lost mana [and] the craft/trade nexus disintegrated further...’ 67

Even though the School of Art’s pre-eminence in arts and crafts began to wane, the appointment of Richard Wallwork in 1910 as master of the life classes anticipated the CCSA’s continued ascendancy in the arts. Critical to its future reputation was the presence of painting tutors Archibald Nicoll, Cecil Kelly, Leonard Booth and Wallwork himself. It became the ‘foremost art school in the country... [and]

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66 CSA minutes, 1 July 1913.
67 Calhoun, p. 36.
emphasis was unquestionably on painting.68 Nicoll and his staff encouraged emerging students such as Grace Butler, Russell Clark, James Cook, Rona Haszard and Colin Lovell-Smith through both their teaching practice and the Society’s awards and exhibitions. Haszard attended the CCSA from 1919 until 1925 and was recognised as a student of considerable potential.69 She exhibited regularly at the Society’s shows from 1922 to 1931, and was awarded the student prize in ‘landscape from nature’ in 1922.70 Following her premature death, a painting by her was acquired for the CSA’s permanent collection.71

In spite – or perhaps even because - of this invaluable encouragement of its students and graduates, the School of Art and the Society were also perceived to be a close-knit coterie. Criticisms of the CCSA’s influence on the selection of work for exhibition at the Society had been expressed as early as 1912. A letter to the Press that year complained:

The younger artists, regardless of past history, are trying to use the Society for mutual admiration purposes. Is proof wanted? Take the hanging of the pictures this year. You have only to note which pictures are placed on the line, and you can by finding the painters’ names in the catalogue identify those who did the hanging....what the Council of the Art Society are doing to allow themselves to be dominated over, as it is only too apparent.72

The question of staff favouring students became the subject of libel action following this exhibition, when a tutor at the School of Art, Leonard Booth, took the Triad arts magazine to court over comments that it had made in its May 1912 issue regarding the CSA’s selection of work for the annual exhibition. It was claimed that the School of Art staff, who were also on the CSA council’s hanging committee, had used their influence improperly. The Triad critic argued that they had been bias in the selection

70 Canterbury Society of Arts, Catalogue 1922, unpaginated.
71 CSA minutes, 24 March 1931. The Society purchased The Sea and the Bay for £15.15.0.
72 Press, 30 March 1912, p. 6.
process. Indeed, it was implied that committee member Cecil Kelly had too readily favoured his wife’s painting:

Now, it is well know that the certain little clique that managed to get on the Council this year by actively canvassing for votes prior to the annual meeting was entirely and indefatigably concerned with placing its own and friends’ work in all the best places: merit had nothing whatever to do with the matter…. “Dawn” by A. Elizabeth Kelly, should not have been accepted by the Council at all, and most certainly should not have been hung on the line. The paint was laid on coarsely, and this picture was piteously lacking in atmosphere. The colour was unpleasant, and there was no hint of a knowledge of anatomy in the drawing of the figure of the girl…. It remains… to write a note of warning to the Council of the Canterbury Society of Arts. If they allow the School of Art to dominate the hanging committee, and give pride of place to their own work and their friends’ inferior work, and put men like Worsley and Wallwork in obscure corners and in the chamber of horrors, trouble is looming for them in the near future.73

Although the courts found in favour of Booth,74 the Triad had good reason to make such allegations, particularly when we consider the art works acquired for the Society’s collection from the 1912 exhibition. These included Diana, by Elizabeth Kelly and The Lilac Sunbonnet by Charles Bickerton, a former CCSA student.75 Although the Triad was required to make a public apology for its accusations, criticisms of collusion and improper influence continued to be made by artists. In 1921 a Press editorial defended the CSA, following a letter from ‘Fairplay’ who had maintained that the Society’s annual exhibitions had developed into a ‘professional artists’ selling booth.’ The newspaper replied that the charges were ludicrous considering the 140 works by professional artists were greatly outnumbered by some 240 amateur works.76

While some critics were concerned by the selection process, such accusations were made in an environment of rising exhibition standards. This was partly due to the

73 Triad, Vol. 20, No. 2, 10 May 1912, pp. 5-6.
74 Press, 31 August 1912, p. 5.
75 CSA minutes, 12 April 1912.
76 Press, 6 April 1921, p. 6.
positive influence of the CCSA under the directorship of Nicoll from 1920 to 1927.\textsuperscript{77} At the end of Nicoll’s first year as director, the Chairman of the Board of Governors of Canterbury College, H. D. Acland, commented on its growing roll with over 500 pupils representing a significant increase over the previous two to three years. Nicoll was singled out for praise, ‘as an artist, a teacher, and an organiser. A proof of what was being done at the School of Art lay in the fact that pupils came to it from parts of New Zealand other than Canterbury.’ Nicoll responded by noting that additional life classes were planned, as well as extended life drawing and painting, providing more extensive facilities than anywhere else in New Zealand and probably Australia.\textsuperscript{78} He was voted onto the CSA council in December 1921, occupying a seat alongside Wallwork. At the first meeting he attended, the question of a student competition was discussed and a subcommittee of Wallwork, Nicoll and the CSA secretary George Donaldson was elected to draw up the conditions and prize list.\textsuperscript{79}

A review for the \textit{Lyttelton Times} of the CSA’s 1926 annual exhibition by James Shelley, Professor of Education at Canterbury College, confirmed that the CCSA was establishing what appeared to be a national school of painting:

\begin{quote}
There has been a regular improvement for several years past in the general level of painting exhibited.... So sure and workmanlike is much of the painting from quite a considerable group of artists in the Christchurch district, and so definitely having a character of its own, that one might almost dare to speak now of a New Zealand School of Painting with its inner circle in Christchurch and its inspirational nucleus at the west end of Hereford Street.\textsuperscript{80}
\end{quote}

In 1926 James Cook was singled out as the CCSA’s most promising painter and was the recipient of a two-year travelling scholarship from the Society for Imperial Culture (SFIC). On his return to Christchurch in 1929, he commented to the \textit{Press} that the teaching and facilities at the CCSA were equal to any he had come across in Europe. He claimed: ‘The School of Art in Christchurch... is as well equipped as many of the best schools of Europe, and the training includes all that one can get in

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{78} \textit{Press}, 21 December 1920, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{79} CSA minutes, 20 December 1921.
\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Lyttelton Times}, 15 March 1926, p. 8.
\end{footnotes}
Europe except at some of the big schools in England.\textsuperscript{81} That same year, Nicoll’s and Wallwork’s efforts at the Art School ‘bore substantial fruit’ and the CCSA ‘moved into closer association with the College when it won University approval to award the Diploma of Fine Arts.’\textsuperscript{82} In 1931 the reputation of the CCSA and its staff was acknowledged by the Canterbury College Board of Governors with the appointment of Wallwork to a seat on its board. In reply to the CSA council’s congratulations, Wallwork drew attention to the association between the CCSA and the CSA and observed that the recognition could be shared by at least five other Society council members who were now, or had been, on the staff of the art school.\textsuperscript{83}

The support for CCSA graduates was also nurtured by the CSA’s administration of the annual Christchurch City Council grant of £50 and the stipulation that works acquired must be by New Zealand artists. Society purchases included Butler’s \textit{Evening Glow} in 1920; Nicoll’s \textit{A Flemish Waterway}, Wallwork’s \textit{The Marble Shrine} and Kelly’s \textit{St. Paul’s Cathedral} in 1923; Elizabeth Kelly’s \textit{Youth} in 1927; Colin Lovell-Smith’s \textit{A Mountain Gull} and James Cook’s \textit{Vaison la Romaine} in 1929; and Russell Clark’s \textit{The Island Trader} in 1930. The Society’s council advocated support for local artists over and above overseas purchases. In July 1935 the CSA president, E. Huie, lodged objections to the allocation of funds towards a touring exhibition of British Art, the Empire Loan Collection, pointing out that:

our society can do more useful work by concentrating on our own annual exhibitions and by encouraging local artists to give exhibitions of their work.

The great interest taken in the late Miss Stoddart’s Exhibition and the amount realised in sales shows that there is a picture loving and picture buying public for the work of New Zealand artists and it is more important that the Society should do what it can to foster art in New Zealand than to spend its funds in bringing out old masters for exhibition only.\textsuperscript{84}

Although still working within the disciplines of the South Kensington system, teaching at the CCSA encouraged the personal development of students’ work.

\textsuperscript{82} Gardner, Beardsley and Carter, p. 230.
\textsuperscript{83} CSA minutes, 5 May 1931.
\textsuperscript{84} E. Huie to G. M. L. Donaldson, 10 July 1935. CSA minutes, 10 July 1935.
Wallwork commented that drawing practice provided a set of in-house rules that could be broken beyond the confines of the CCSA. He maintained that the School of Art Sketch Club:

> gave the student an opportunity to express something of himself, to develop his own individual work... The student should not do work of a similar nature to that executed in the school.... The work at the school had of necessity to follow certain definite lines, but upon this solid foundation the student will build his own methods of expression.\(^85\)

The CSA’s and CCSA’s dominance in the arts was not just limited to the support that they maintained for the arts and the work of graduates. It also included a wider engagement in the cultural life of Christchurch. The opening of the annual exhibition remained an important social occasion until the 1960s. When Simpson arrived in Christchurch in 1958, he was struck by the attention given to the opening function as a ‘white tie affair. A pale reflection of the Royal Academy,’ on which it was undoubtedly modelled.\(^86\) From 1885, the Society had included musical items from leading Christchurch musicians, establishing a precedent for a social occasion that encompassed more than just the viewing of works of art.\(^87\) In 1921, for the first time, the opening ‘conversazione and private view’ of the CSA’s annual exhibition was reported in detail on the Women’s Corner pages of the Press, separately from the opening and review of the exhibition. Attention was given to the design of the gallery interior and the names of the ‘best’ in Christchurch society who attended. The newspaper observed that ‘The gallery was brightened with flowers and palms, and made cosy with carpets and easy chairs,’ and noted the presence of ‘Professor and Mrs Hight...Mr McGregor Wright... Mr and Mrs A. E. Flower and many others.’\(^88\) The importance of this occasion in the social calendar grew throughout the 1920s and lent public credibility to the School of Art staff and the Society’s council. In March 1924 the Press reported:

> The annual conversazione of the Canterbury Society of Arts has, for many

\(^{85}\) Press, 13 May 1924, p. 2.  
\(^{86}\) Simpson, 5 January 2006.  
\(^{87}\) Lyttelton Times, 25 February 1885, p. 4.  
\(^{88}\) Press, 11 March 1921, p. 2.
years, been eagerly and pleasurably anticipated as one of the most important
social functions of the year, but, without doubt, the reception held last night at
the Art Gallery eclipsed all former ‘private views’ held by the Society. The
walls of the ball-room and of the permanent gallery had been requisitioned for
the display of the pictures, and so the president and members of the Society
must have been gratified, even flattered, to notice that shortly after eight
o’clock, in response to their invitation, both spacious rooms were filled with
guests. Amongst the many beautiful dresses worn by the ladies present were
several gracefully draped frocks of black - some brightened with a vivid touch
of colour, some finished with effective cabochons and motifs, and many,
particularly of velvet relying for their charming effect entirely on the richness
of the material….. Mrs A. F. Nicoll, sea-green marocain, Mrs Richard
Wallwork, draped gown of shot poie de satin with sleeves and under-dress of
gold tissue…. Mrs Cecil Kelly, steel coloured panne velvet trimmed with
monkey fur.89

The individuals in Mrs Kelly’s portraits in the 1920s and 30s typified the ‘class,
money, and beauty… of this stylish period.’90 Kelly had been elected a CSA working
member in 1903 and from then until her death in 1946, she exhibited some 286 works,
many of which were society portraits of leading families and businessmen in
Canterbury. Responding to the demand for such work, large formal portraits
dominated her contribution to the CSA’s annual exhibition in 1924.91 Kelly’s public
record of Christchurch society people celebrated their status and included individuals
such as Mrs Bernard Wood, the daughter of Sir Joseph Ward, the Prime Minister of
New Zealand from 1906 to 1912.92 Not surprisingly, the CSA council’s authority in
cultural and social matters in Christchurch was highlighted in 1927 when the Duke
and Duchess of York visited the city. Wallwork, Kelly, McGregor Wright and
Donaldson were chosen to select art works from the Society’s collection to decorate
the royal couple’s rooms at Warners Hotel.93

89 Press, 28 March 1924, p. 2.
Canterbury, 1999, p. 44.
91 Abbott, p. 56.
92 Abbott, p. 60.
93 CSA minutes, 15 February 1927.
More importantly however, the CSA’s and the CCSA’s combined influence on the arts fostered the establishment of the city’s first public art gallery. In March 1923 the CSA council put forward a motion that the Society was ‘in favour of approaching the Domain board for a site in the public gardens for the erection of a permanent art gallery.’\textsuperscript{94} Progress was initially slow, but was greatly assisted by Jamieson’s donation of ‘pictures, prints, statuary, furniture and porcelain to the society on condition that the society suitably housed them in the public domain within four years from May 1\textsuperscript{st} 1925.’\textsuperscript{95} The solidarity of support between the CSA and the CCSA was most apparent when Jamieson’s proposal at a Society meeting on 24 May 1927 was followed within the week by an announcement in the \textit{Press} by the Canterbury College Board of Governors that the:

\begin{quote}
Board express its entire sympathy with the project of building an Art Gallery in the Domain and pledges itself to give the matter every support in its power. Further, that the Board offers in deposit to the Art Gallery the collection of sculpture, paintings, and engravings at present in the Canterbury Museum.\textsuperscript{96}
\end{quote}

When the Robert McDougall Art Gallery opened, the CSA and the CCSA assumed a dominant role on the advisory committee which was formed, following the presentation of the Society’s collection to the public gallery. The CSA’s representatives included Wallwork and Nicoll,\textsuperscript{97} and both were to occupy central roles in advising the City Council on appropriate works for the public collection over the next twenty years.

Throughout the 1920s and 30s the CSA’s council was dominated by the presence of Nicoll, Kelly and Wallwork. As the Professor of Education who lectured in art history at Canterbury College, Shelley would have undoubtedly been more than capable of making a further vital contribution to the CSA’s support for the arts that would have complemented that of the others. However, in spite of the significant influence that he had on Canterbury artists such as Rita Angus and Haszard, and the authority of his regular reviews in the \textit{Lyttelton Times} and \textit{Art in New Zealand},

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{94} CSA minutes 6 March 1923.
\item \textsuperscript{95} CSA minutes, 24 May 1927.
\item \textsuperscript{96} \textit{Press}, 31 May 1927, p. 8.
\item \textsuperscript{97} \textit{Press}, 10 February 1932, p. 3.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Shelley was never a CSA council member or even mentioned in the Society’s minutes. Neither does he appear to have attended its annual exhibition openings. He may have been an ‘added stimulus to the climate of activity in Canterbury,’ but although he captured the drama circles of Christchurch ‘the social cachet of Christchurch visual arts defeated him.’ Shelley’s biographer, Ian Carter, maintains that:

The whole force field of Christchurch visual arts was held together by the institutional gravity of the Canterbury Society of Arts (CSA). This body had been founded in 1880; forty years later it was dominated by Nicoll, Wallwork, Kelly and their wives.

Shelley chose to support the arts outside the CSA council’s influence, through his administration of the SFIC, his encouragement of the Group and the New Zealand Society of Artists (NZSA), and his insightful reviews of the Society’s annual exhibitions.

So why did Shelley fail to find a position on the CSA council or work to support its principles and ideologies? As a professor, Shelley might have felt that the CCSA staff was below him in rank. Equally, like CSA councillor and lawyer, Alan Brassington, Shelley was never a serious practitioner of the arts and there was an intellectual gap between him, as a Cambridge-educated professor, and the School of Art staff, which they perhaps resented. Shelley was on much better terms with the more maverick Francis Shurrock. More importantly however, Shelley retained a principled socialist philosophy and a belief that ‘shared social experience gave the only proper basis for the good life.’

98 Roberts, Concise History, p. 39.
101 Interview, Simpson, 14 November 2007.
among local ‘workers and dreamers.’ Shelley had left England with a sense that the old world was dying and New Zealand represented a new beginning. ‘His ability to appreciate what New Zealand painters flirting more or less seriously with modernism were trying to do was unusual in its time, and liberating both for students and the general public.’ The difference between his ideology and the CSA council’s was clearly evident in a 1937 lecture he gave to the SFIC:

“Artists were dangerous people” said Professor James Shelley, Director of Broadcasting to the Society of [sic] Imperial Culture on Saturday evening. “The sort of people who would come to a meeting like this in an old sports jacket and with no tie on – dangerous people…. “The artists are the people who break through” he said, “while we civil servants are trying to establish and arrange society…”

Shelley’s comprehension of modernism went beyond his contemporaries in Christchurch, and through the Group and the NZSA, he encouraged like-minded artists to exhibit beyond the confines of the crowded CSA annual exhibitions. Sadly, the collective authority of Wallwork, Nicoll and Kelly ensured that Shelley’s skills and artistic knowledge were kept at a firm distance.

In 1932, the status of the CCSA and the Society was reflected in the School of Art’s 50th anniversary exhibition, held in the CSA’s gallery, free of charge, with the Society council offering assistance ‘in every way.’ A survey exhibition of the CCSA’s history included work by its best known artists, including ‘David Low… Raymond M’Intyre [sic]… Rhona Haszard,’ as well as paintings by the ‘younger generation… Olivia Spencer Bower, Colin and Rata Lovell-Smith… [and] Russell Clark.’ Further recognition of the teaching staff’s success was evident with the acknowledgement in 1935 of Cecil Kelly’s success at the Royal Academy and Elizabeth Kelly’s representation at both the Academy and the Paris Salon. In 1939, the news station 3ZB considered broadcasting talks on the arts and Sydney

103 Carter, p. 183.
104 Carter, p. 187.
105 Press, 1 November 1937, p. 12.
106 CSA minutes. 26 April 1932.
107 Christchurch Times, 9 July 1932, p. 3.
108 CSA minutes, 31 May 1935.
Thompson, Wallwork and Nicoll were immediately identified as being the ideal presenters. In 1947 Nicoll's longstanding contribution to the arts was recognised with the awarding of an OBE in the Birthday Honours list. Nicoll had also been elected to 'confer with the City Council and others re matters pertaining to civic beauty.' The CSA council was pleased to offer advice on such questions and accordingly, in 1946, lobbied for the preservation of Riccarton Bush.

However, the dominating presence of the School of Art staff on the CSA council led over time to complacency. Criticised for its selection of work for the annual exhibitions, it was sometimes too casual. During the selection process for the annual exhibition in March 1946, the Society's minutes noted that it was up to the discretion of the artists present (Elizabeth and Cecil Kelly, and Lovell-Smith included) on the council as to whether or not they retired while voting was taking place. The election of officers appeared to be little more than a shuffling of School teaching staff between positions. Throughout the 1920s and 30s, the number of CCSA staff, past and present, on the Society's council varied between three and six members. In 1948 however, at the height of the 'Pleasure Garden Incident' it had increased to eight, exposing the CSA council to serious criticism by Charles Brasch in *Landfall*. Until that year, the close association between the two institutions had remained unchallenged and both appeared surprised by demands from artists and art lovers that the CSA should acquire a contemporary work by Frances Hodgkins or else gift such a painting to the public collection.

Although the 'Pleasure Garden Incident' provided a public platform for serious debate on their authority in the arts in Canterbury, the following generation of CCSA staff and CSA council members maintained a continued stronghold. Simpson recalls his surprise, shortly after he was appointed to the School of Art staff in 1959, when the head of the School, Colin Lovell-Smith, suggested that pressing CSA business should be dealt with and resolved by the CCSA, and any decision tabled at a later Society meeting. Simpson recalls:

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109 CSA minutes, 4 March 1939.
110 CSA minutes, 22 July 1947.
111 CSA minutes, 11 February 1941.
112 CSA minutes, Secretary's report to Council, July 1946.
113 CSA minutes, 7 March 1946.
I felt the relationship was too close. Colin Lovell-Smith said that there was an important issue facing the CSA and we might as well deal with in the school as we were the most influential members. The CSA was an incorporated society established to foster the arts for the whole region. For the art school to run roughshod over the whole thing revealed an arrogant attitude.... When I was appointed head of the school I made it my business to ensure that the two were separate. It was not proper to discuss the CSA's business at the School.\textsuperscript{115}

Although the 'Pleasure Garden Incident' gave important public attention to the status of modern art in New Zealand, it also reflected wider cultural changes beginning to take place in post-war society. Artist and former student Vivien Lynn recalls how these broader developments in the early 1950s inevitably impacted on the School of Art:

In 1949 I found Christchurch and the art school dull, absorbed in middle-class notions of class and breeding, and nineteenth century in outlook.... As it transpired, in 1949, the art school was at the end of an era. Before the war it was perceived by some as a finishing school for the dilettante sons and daughters of the wealthy middle class and that view persisted into the time I was a student.... So when I arrived in 1949 the old faculty was devolving and a new one being put in place. Rata Lovell-Smith and Francis Shurrock were taking their last classes, Russell Clark, with a background as a war artist and illustrator, known for his drawings of Maori, was the main teacher and Bill Sutton's return from England was anticipated. There was a sense that fusty nineteenth-century art ideals were on the way out.\textsuperscript{116}

Quentin Macfarlane, who attended the School of Art from 1954 to 1957, also recalls that the period was characterised by significant change.

In some ways my time at the school was the end of an era in its long history. Many of the old staff were soon to retire and the outmoded Edwardian teaching

\textsuperscript{115} Interview, Simpson, 14 November 2007.
\textsuperscript{116} Vivien Lynn, Interviewed by Peter Vangioni, October 2007, http://www.artschool125.co.nz/Interviews/V-Lynn/
style was beginning to look out of keeping with the times. As students of the soon-to-be rebellious rock 'n' roll era, we were aware of this and tried to implement change.... under the fading light of Colin Lovell-Smith, the school director, no changes from the regime of antique and figure drawing, and centred around figure composition, could be expected. The ghosts of Richard Wallwork, Archibald Nicholl and Cecil Kelly were ever present. Except for Eric Doudney and Russell Clark [sic],117 all the lecturers had trained at the School of Fine Art and perpetuated the outdated Royal College of Art theme of the 1920s.... I exhibited the first non-representational painting from the art school in my honours submission in 1957, held at the Canterbury Society of Arts in Durham Street and somehow got away with it without any fuss, so times were changing.118

The CSA council also began to acknowledge such influences and by the late 1950s provided more obvious support for an emerging local modernism. The annual exhibition in April 1956 included a section of works that were ‘in some sense modern,’ with paintings by Evelyn Page, Russell Clark and Dorothy Manning.119 Furthermore, at the opening of this exhibition, CSA president, A. A. G. Reed, announced that the Society would be holding four exhibitions that year, as opposed to one, and that wider community participation in the arts would be encouraged. Touring shows scheduled included John Weeks and Henry Moore.120 In 1957, an exhibition of work by young New Zealand artists, dominated by students from the School of Art, included paintings by Patrick Hanly, Hamish Keith and Wellington-trained John Drawbridge with work that emphasised ‘colour and form... as the expressive elements of painting.’121

This encouragement of young contemporary Canterbury artists and the use that graduates and staff from the School of Art made of the CSA gallery stood in contrast to the absence of support from the Robert McDougall Art Gallery under William Baverstock’s directorship. Macfarlane argues that the ‘Robert McDougall Art Gallery

117 Roberts, Concise History, p. 38. Russell Clark trained at the Canterbury College School of Art.
119 Press, 10 April 1956, p. 9.
120 Press, 12 April 1956, p. 8.
presented itself as an 'art tomb.' The School of Art staff exerted considerable influence over the CSA and enlivened its programme. In 1957 Shurrock urged the Society to exhibit design and craft works in its exhibitions, and in 1959 Macfarlane requested that the CSA extend its support for younger artists by lowering membership fees for students and granting provisional membership to allow them to exhibit at the annual spring and autumn exhibitions. Simpson recalls that the School of Fine Arts’ influence on the Society’s exhibition programme throughout the 1960s was tremendously beneficial to the development of the arts in Canterbury:

The school had a much bigger input into the CSA, particularly in terms of mounting travelling exhibitions, designing the exhibition, and making its components. One of the best was the ‘Contemporary Italian Sculpture’ exhibition [in 1965]. It was wonderfully done, we went to the trouble of designing the lettering and had great vertical shafts of coloured ribbons [placed in the gallery between the art works]. We did work very closely with the CSA and we were welcomed. We put an enormous amount of energy into it. [In contrast] the McDougall Gallery was a fossil.

The 20/20 group, an association of art school staff and graduates, donated £75 towards the cost of the Italian sculpture exhibition and in response to their generosity CSA president, Stewart Mair, offered it two weeks’ free rent for its own exhibition in 1966. Undoubtedly, André Brooke’s earlier appointment as CSA secretary had made an important contribution to these developments. Simpson recalls that unlike Baverstock, Brooke was sympathetic towards serious artists:

He talked the same language as the art school staff. He understood what you were saying all the time... It was a very fruitful period. We developed a relationship not only in the visual arts but through music. The CSA became closely identified with the faculty of music and fine arts.... André Brooke was

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122 Macfarlane, Interviewed by Vangioni.
123 Press, 1 November 1957, p. 3 and Mark Stocker, Frances Shurrock. Shaping New Zealand Sculpture, Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2000, pp. 29-30. The School of Arts’ pre-eminence in painting from the 1920s encouraged a popular belief that ‘art’ equalled ‘painting.’ Shurrock lamented the status accorded to sculpture as a consequence.
125 Interview, Simpson, 14 November 2007.
126 Press, 18 November 1965, p. 6.
able to work with a very wide range of people. [That is] those in business, buyers for shops, government departments. Bavister had a very limited range [of social skills] while André Brooke was at ease with people. The Design Association brought in a group of young architects, Peter Beaven, Miles Warren, and Stewart Minson. We [that is, the School of Art] did all this because there was a vacuum. 127

In addition to Brooke’s welcome commitment to contemporary art, the CSA provided further support for serious artists and the School of Fine Arts staff through the introduction of the CSA Guthrey Travel Award. The inaugural recipient in 1966 was the lecturer in sculpture, Tom Taylor. 128

However, the Society’s broader responsibility for the arts also meant that while staff and students made extensive use of its facilities, perceptions began to develop that the exhibition of professional and amateur artists within the same gallery was no longer appropriate in an increasingly professional arts environment. In addition, the greater number of exhibitions at 66 Gloucester Street meant that the CSA sought an accompanying growth in revenue to cover its administration and maintenance costs by growing its membership. Consequently, the Society’s council committed to the regular exhibition of work by its amateur working members. This was fine in theory, but in practice such ‘kiwi’ egalitarianism became incompatible with an increasingly professional – and elitist - School of Arts. It phased out its commitment to the trades profession and focussed on its role as a School of Fine Arts, as its name implied. Thus, by the mid-1970s a number of the staff demanded greater consistency in the CSA’s schedule with more emphasis on the work of serious New Zealand artists. Simpson himself had raised questions about the relative importance of the annual autumn exhibition to the development of the arts as early as 1965. He recalls that he was critical because he found it:

...lacking in intensity. The smaller artists’ shows had [more] intense works in a small area. When you went to the CSA it was a bit like liquorice allsorts. There was no coherent policy about what would be shown there. No overall vision as to what the function of the gallery was. It ceased to be a gallery and it

127 Interview, Simpson, 14 November 2007.
became a market place, and this happened under Rusty [Laidlaw]. He had tremendous enthusiasm and support, but he was catholic. Nothing was turned down for exhibition.\textsuperscript{129}

Laidlaw's enthusiasm for a growing popular membership throughout the 1960s, particularly during the period in which funds were needed for the building of a new gallery, meant that professional artists, hobbyists and academic staff alike were encompassed within the Society's schedule. Although its supportive involvement meant that the School of Fine Arts and serious artists now enjoyed a purpose-built gallery for their use in Gloucester Street, the need to maintain an ambitious exhibition programme and the demands of revenue, meant that amateurs and professionals were, by necessity, accommodated side by side.

Students from the School of Fine Arts continued to hold graduate shows at the CSA gallery and staff regularly contributed to exhibitions, but in the mid to late 1970s, criticism of the Society's lack of a more rigorous curatorial policy became an increasingly serious issue. The establishment of the Brooke Gifford Gallery in 1975, the demise of The Group in 1977, the appointment of University of Canterbury art history lecturer Rodney Wilson as director of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery in 1978, and the opening in 1980 of the specialist print studio, the Gingko Gallery, were all evidence of an emerging arts professionalism, in part, instigated by School of Fine Arts staff. Tom Taylor, the inaugural recipient of the CSA Guthrey Travel Award maintained that 'we will knock over the Society or drive them out of business.'\textsuperscript{130}

Although Taylor's comments sound like a rallying cry to battle, they must be qualified by acknowledging that the desire to exhibit beyond the Society's exhibition programme was perfectly reasonable. Taylor's colleague and lecturer in painting, Don Peebles, recalls that the large group exhibitions at the CSA did not provide ample opportunity to reveal the full extent of a serious artist's work, and that the emerging dealer galleries fulfilled a genuine, and well overdue, need:

\begin{quote}
If you are showing in large group exhibitions rather than solo shows, you are not really showing your own work, or getting attention and much focus on your
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{129} Interview, Simpson, 14 November 2007.
\textsuperscript{130} Interview, Simpson, 5 January 2006.
work. In a dealer gallery there is a much greater sense of getting attention. The dealer galleries became far more attractive to serious artists.\textsuperscript{131}

A number of staff however, further argued that the CSA's monopoly on exhibitions and sales, discussed as above, made it impossible for competition to emerge. The Society was now perceived to be restricting arts professionalism. Indeed, the month before the Brooke Gifford Gallery opened, lecturer in Art Education Ted Bracey had written to the CSA council, drawing attention to this very issue and complaining over damage to two of his paintings included in the recent annual CSA president's exhibition. Somewhat heavy-handedly,\textsuperscript{132} Bracey advised the CSA of the need to adopt better standards in the care of art works:

\textit{The C.S.A. will recall that it invited me to show work in the recent President's Exhibition, that I accepted the invitation and that on the weekend preceding [sic] the hanging of the exhibition, I delivered three paintings to the C.S.A. gallery... Fieldshift 18 1973, Fieldshift 21 1974, Fieldshift 22 1974... one was purchased by the Hocken Library Collection... all of the paintings arrived at their destinations irretrievably damaged – in effect destroyed... The two unsold works were seen, by Mr McFarlane [sic] of the University of Canterbury School of Art, in the gallery, after the exhibition had been taken down, stacked one against the other, in a manner consistent with the damage they ultimately sustained. The carrier who delivered these works to my studio in Sumner was seen carrying them in a manner consistent with the damage they sustained (this same carrier made it clear that he was given no instruction with regard to how the paintings should be handled). Such evidence suggests that there is equal possibility of the damage having been sustained in the gallery and in transit between the gallery and my studio... It might be useful for the C.S.A. to know that I spent two days packing my paintings for the journey from Sumner to the C.S.A. gallery. This involved manufacturing a device to ensure that no one painting would come in contact with any other.}\textsuperscript{133}

\textsuperscript{131} Interview, Don Peebles, 8 March 2007.
\textsuperscript{132} The handling and storage of art works in the 1970s was no better or worse at the CSA gallery than it was in dealer or public galleries. There were, almost certainly, few measures or guidelines for the care of art works.
\textsuperscript{133} E. N. Bracey to The President, CSA, 23 May 1975, Director’s Correspondence, R. Laidlaw and Nola Barron. 1965–1979, Box 55, CAG 1.
Bracey may have been keen to establish a greater degree of arts professionalism in Canterbury, but he was wrong to assume that the Society was unsympathetic to his intentions. From the late 1970s, Nola Barron had exempted graduates from rental fees at the gallery for their Diploma submission or first solo exhibition, partly to ensure that the long-standing association between the School of Fine Arts and CSA remained meaningful and to provide them with exposure to a public space in which they could begin to seriously profile their work. Her successor, Christopher Taylor’s plans to upgrade the Society’s gallery revealed that he in turn was also aware of the need to raise standards. He also expressed some sympathy with Bracey’s intentions. He recalls:

> I implicitly understood where he was coming from. If I was an ambitious artist and wanting to be seriously regarded, I would not show at the CSA. My position in the art world would be dissipated by the Bishopdale potters group.

Although staff at the School of Fine Arts were demanding that the Society address the quality of its exhibition programme, Christopher Taylor was equally justifiably critical of lapses in professionalism at the School itself. This was manifest in the behaviour of sculpture graduates in 1988 who reneged on their commitment to exhibit in the Mair gallery, cancelling too late for him to organise an alternative exhibition. However, even though Barron and Taylor recognised that significant changes were beginning to take place in the way in which the art world was administered, circumstances were beyond their control. While the annual Group exhibition at the CSA gallery had allowed it to retain some degree of relevance to the serious art community, the decision to bring The Group to an end in 1977 reflected declining respect in the art community for the Society’s role in promoting contemporary art. (Plate 38) Simpson recalls that:

> When things seemed to be going so well there developed a strong strand of opposition to the CSA by the art school. Those who were not actively opposed

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134 Interview, Barron, 4 December 2006.
135 Interview, Christopher Taylor, 22 June 2007.
136 Christopher Taylor to Tom Taylor, 12 September 1988, Director’s Correspondence 1988-1993, Box No. 56, CAG 1.
to it became increasingly lukewarm. The Group show disappeared in 1977 and this was evidence that the CSA was... too tolerant [in its exhibition standards].

Long-serving member of The Group, - and the CSA - W. A. Sutton, also stopped participating in exhibitions at the Society shortly after The Group’s demise. Sutton had been a CSA council member almost continuously from 1950 to 1968, but in 1978 he held his last major exhibition in the Society’s gallery, the impressive, *Te Tihi o Kahukura and Sky*, which consisted of ten large-scale paintings of the Port Hills. By 1982, his contribution to the CSA’s programme was limited to a portrait of Sir Michael Fowler in the President’s exhibition. Like Sutton, Peebles also ceased to exhibit with the CSA from the late 1970s, being finally represented in the group exhibition, *Drawing ’79*. Peebles believes that Sutton’s absence from the Society’s exhibition schedule was not based on any sense of ill-will. Sutton had been entirely loyal to the CSA, as he was to the arts in Canterbury, throughout his life. It was simply that more attractive opportunities for serious artists were now available elsewhere. Peebles recalls that: ‘Bill had this tremendous loyalty to Canterbury. He never expressed to me that he was not loyal [to the CSA].’

Neil Dawson, a former student of Tom Taylor’s also voted with his feet. Dawson had won the CSA Guthrey Travel Award (1978), having exhibited regularly in group and solo exhibitions at the Gloucester Street gallery since his graduation in 1970. However, as with Peebles, *Drawing ’79* was the last occasion when his work was displayed in the Society’s exhibition programme.

The absence of artists such as Sutton, Peebles and Dawson from the CSA schedule would have made a significant impact on the quality of its exhibition programme. However, of greater importance to the Society, and its relationship with the School of

137 Interview, Simpson, 14 November 2007.
139 Unger, p. 187.
141 Interview, Peebles, 8 March 2008.
Fine Arts, was the appointment of Rodney Wilson as director of the public gallery in 1978. He shifted the attention of the latter’s staff from the Society to the McDougall Gallery. Simpson recalls that:

Change was accelerated by Rodney as the director. Suddenly all the collaboration between the CSA and Art School changed. The door at the McDougall opened wide. There were now prints exhibitions with catalogues by students and Rodney made the McDougall Gallery open for [the exhibition of] final years honours students.... It really demonstrated that something had happened. It was intense and [executed with] such power. Rodney had been on the school staff for three or four years and he carried a number of friendships with him to the McDougall Gallery. He was trying to create a new standard of display. He didn’t have the means to do so and the art school was invaluable as a resource. Max Hailstone designed labels and catalogues for the public gallery’s shows.143

On of the first exhibitions curated by Wilson for the McDougall Gallery was ‘Manner and Matter. A Study of Contrasts in the Engraving and Etching of Anthony van Dyck and Rembrandt van Rijn.’ Wilson made use of students from the new art history department.144 Other exhibitions scheduled included recent works by Peebles, in May 1979, an honours painting and printmaking exhibition by Michele Beautoy, Jean Dickenson and Peter Ransom in October, and a survey show of prints by Honoré Daumier.145 The CSA’s long standing, and mutually beneficial relationship, with the School of Fine Arts was effectively over, eclipsed by a dynamic and professional public art gallery.

Although the severing of this association occurred fairly rapidly, its demise should not have been a complete surprise to the CSA council. While it was inevitable, and certainly beyond the capacity of the Society to halt, in retrospect we can see signs of its eventuality over a twenty-year timeframe. Similar trends were evident in the growing national interest in contemporary New Zealand art. Simpson recalls that a

143 Interview, Simpson, 14 November 2007.
145 The Bulletin, No. 3 May–June, No. 5 July–August, and No. 6 November–December 1979, unpagedinated.
momentum of circumstances and changes in the arts were apparent in Christchurch from the late 1950s, and that the CSA, the School of Fine Arts and other organisations and individuals, all played a greater or lesser part in this:

The Several Arts [craft shop and gallery] would take works from students and give them money [for it], later reselling their work in the gallery. In addition, Gallery 91 was another outlet for students with exhibitions of up to 10 to 15 paintings. It was the beginning of dealer galleries. In addition, the removal of the arts school out to Ilam happened in 1957 and this also had an influence. The CSA had been a five minute walk from the art school in town and if there was a need for a quick decision [by the staff on Society business] it could be sorted out during tea break. Once the School of Art staff were out at Ilam, unless they had their own car, it was more difficult to get in to town. There was also Ron O’Reilly at the library. He established a loan collection and held a status as a purchaser of works of art. This was another strand in developing the arts in Christchurch.... Because of Baverstock’s resistance to modern art, O’Reilly put on exhibitions. There were several shows of Colin McCahon and one of Louise Henderson, and a retrospective of John Weeks. O’Reilly provided an alternative outlet as part of the function of the city library. In addition, out at Ilam we developed the long corridor of the School for exhibitions. When the City Council turned down the McCahon Tomorrow Will be the Same but not as This Is, we had it out at the School.... Previously the CSA was the only place. There was a number of facets taking place but they were all going in the same direction to make present day works available to the public. The Art School also had a policy of acquiring works by British artists. This included works by Matthew Smith, Laurence Gowing, Victor Pasmore and Lucian Freud. These shows were at the Art School and seen by other staff and students. All [of these things] added up to increased opportunity to see what was going.146

Peebles in turn notes the opportunities potentially available for developing a more consistently professional programme at the CSA. He recalls:

I was asked by Stewart Mair to curate a show in 1969. I had been reviewing for The Press and he said to me, ‘You seem to know so much about it, you curate a show.’ I did that. It was called ‘Drawing Towards Painting,’ and included work

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146 Interview, Simpson, 14 November 2007.
by Ralph Hotere and Ted Francis. That was something that set a standard. It was a different proposition to show the drawings of Hotere, compared to the working members exhibitions. So, there were attempts to make it more of a serious venue and then they might be able to attract the more serious type of artist.... Later, [in the late 1970s] one of the things that changed the nature of the CSA was the fact that sculptors wanted big floor spaces, Martie Mendelsberg, Bing Dawe and Neil Dawson made good use of it. So they [the CSA] could have looked at something else.  

In the month prior to Holland's resignation from the CSA in 1987, three solo exhibitions by the recently appointed senior lecturer in painting at the School of Fine Arts, Riduan Tomkins, opened in three leading galleries in Christchurch. Appointed by Bracey, who was now head of the art school, Tomkins held shows at the Brooke Gifford Gallery, the Gingko Gallery and the Robert McDougall Art Gallery. Ten years earlier, he would almost certainly have exhibited at the CSA gallery as a 'one-stop' venue. However, the preference accorded to a dealer gallery, a specialist print studio and a public gallery, certainly suggests that the Society was no longer considered a reputable venue by the School of Fine Arts.

Although the CSA continued to maintain an informal association with staff and graduates, the collective and authoritative position that both had enjoyed had ended. The relationship between them had long dominated the arts in Canterbury and its importance can hardly be overestimated. Without significant or consistent funding from either central or local government, the association between the two bodies had been critical in fostering the arts in Canterbury for close on a century. Careers were nurtured by exhibitions in the CSA's gallery, with the CCSA often dictating the Society's exhibition policies. The relationship between these two institutions was not limited to education and the exhibition of art, but played a leading role in fashionable Christchurch society and in cultural matters. Although social changes in the 1950s witnessed the demise of an older generation of artists and art educators, both institutions maintained their authority, continuing to assume responsibility for the arts and an emerging local modernism during the 1950s and 60s. However, the opening

147 Interview, Peebles, 8 March 2008.
of the CSA’s Gloucester Street gallery in 1968, with its attendant exhibition programme, more than ever, placed pressure on the Society to nurture amateur and professional artists alike. These additional demands occurred as an increasing number of School of Fine Arts staff advocated greater specialisation and professionalism in the arts. In spite of the encouragement that Society secretary Laidlaw and later, Barron, made to progressive New Zealand art, their efforts were never going to fulfil the irresistible tide of the kind of arts professionalism and specialist practice demanded by Bracey, Wilson and their younger colleagues. Although the CSA’s new gallery had been established to accommodate such intentions, it ironically came to be perceived to be hindering, rather than encouraging contemporary art. The choice of multiple venues for exhibitions by Tomkins in 1987 was indicative of a complex, specialist art world that had replaced the model of the nineteenth-century art society and an aesthetic, political and social stronghold in Canterbury that had thrived for close to a century.

No one wanted to see the CSA survive. People wanted to see it go away and die.  

On 4 December 1995 the CSA president Simon Marks wrote to the Christchurch Civic Art Gallery Trust, accepting its offer of $362,233.00 (excl GST) to purchase 42 works from the Society’s permanent collection to be presented to the Robert McDougall Art Gallery. Nine of the most valuable of the Christchurch Civic Art Gallery Trust’s acquisitions had been paid for with a grant of $205,000 from the Trust Bank Community Trust. The catalogue that accompanied their exhibition at the McDougall Gallery in March 1996 noted: ‘The addition of these works to the Robert McDougall Art Gallery collection... greatly assists in filling some of the gaps left during the years when the city was not actively purchasing for the collection.’ These comments largely referred to art works acquired by the Society between 1932 and the late 1950s when the Christchurch City Council’s acquisitions for the McDougall Gallery had been meagre. Among the paintings purchased was a major work from Petrus van der Velden’s Otira series, Stream in the Otira Gorge (1893), as well as an early, impressionist study by Grace Butler, On the Beach – New Brighton (1916) of great historical interest to Christchurch in its depiction of the Edwardian beach scene’s wooden pier. The Christchurch Civic Art Gallery Trust also secured Ivy Fife’s The Queen’s Visit (1954), Frances Hodgkins’s Barn, Picardy (1924) and Evelyn Page’s Lambton Quay (1949).

Just as the CSA had gifted 125 art works to the City Council in 1932 for the newly established Robert McDougall Art Gallery, the sale of the 42 works, comprising oil

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1 ‘Sometimes you have to put down a wounded animal.’ Interview, Andrew Drummond, 10 May 2007.
2 Interview, Nigel Buxton, 22 May 2007.
3 Simon Marks to David Stock, 4 December 1995, De-accession of the Permanent Collection, CSA Filing Cabinet, AO 18, Canterbury Society of Arts Charitable Trust Trading as COCA (Centre of Contemporary Art).
6 Apart from essential maintenance, between 1932 and 1947 the City Council had allocated £311 in total towards the public gallery. Canterbury Society of Art, Annual General Meeting Report 1947.
paintings, watercolours and sculptures, represented the placement of a further substantial portion of its permanent collection into the public gallery. However, in this instance, circumstances were entirely different. The CSA’s commitment to its collection had been fundamental to its objectives for more than 100 years, but the de-accession of important works in 1995 reflected the abandonment of this position. Cumulative financial losses of almost $90,000 from 1991 to 1993,\(^7\) consolidated by further debt of $30,265 in the 1993/94 financial year,\(^8\) and a prediction that 80% of exhibitions for the coming year would be curated in-house due to an absence of artists’ bookings, meant that it was facing a crisis of finance – and identity.\(^9\) On the eve of a special meeting in April 1995 to consider selling the collection and building at 66 Gloucester Street, the situation was thus summarised in the *Press*:

> The CSA has operated at a loss for five of the last six years; the shortfall being met each year from cash reserves. The current financial year will also see a loss, says the president, Simon Marks. Monthly running costs amount to $13,000 to $14,000 – covering wages, gallery costs, and the running of CSA activities... The gallery, he says, has suffered from the competition from smaller commercial galleries, losing what had been, in effect, a monopoly position for the CSA. “It did very well back then [from 1977 to 1986]. It built up through successful trading, building capital reserves. In the last fifteen years we have seen a proliferation of dealer galleries. Because we have lost market share, our trading has gone down. The deficit has been met from capital, which reduces investment income. We are losing both ways.”\(^10\)

Following the meeting, CSA council member David Page commented that the time was ‘overdue for the Society to change direction and start doing things which really... [did] help the promotion and understanding of the Visual Arts.’\(^11\) After 115 years, the Society now seemed irrelevant to the development of serious art. Certainly, any consideration of the CSA’s declining circumstances from the late 1980s to 1996, exposes its deficiencies and raises questions about why it had left it so late to address

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\(^7\) Sub-committee meeting of the Finance Committee, 19 May 1994, Director’s Folder 1993-1995, Box 56, CAG 1, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu.

\(^8\) CSA minutes, 26 October 1994.

\(^9\) CSA minutes, 22 September 1994.


\(^11\) David Page, 21 June 1995, CSA Steering Committee Report, Steering Committee Folder, Canterbury Society of Arts Charitable Trust Trading as COCA.
its situation. It also reveals that Canterbury's longest-standing arts institution was largely abandoned by many in the art community. However, in the de-accessioning of its permanent collection, it could be argued that this now severely weakened institution displayed a generosity that ensured that it made a further and final, significant contribution to the arts in Canterbury.

The CSA’s decision to de-accession work from its collection was not made in haste. It reflected policies developed since the early 1970s. A number of works demarcated for de-accession in 1995 had been on long-term loan to the McDougall Gallery since 1971, including Butler’s On the Beach – New Brighton and Sydney Thompson’s Au Pardon, while Hodgkins’s Barn, Picardy was lent in 1981. In 1983 the inadequacies of the CSA’s storage facilities were responsible for the further transfer of a portion of the collection. Nola Barron approached the curator at the McDougall Gallery, Neil Roberts, who accepted 40 works on the understanding that they remained the property of the Society. This was followed in 1986 by a further loan of 39 works, including Raymond McIntyre’s Self Portrait (1913). As the CSA considered this loan, it acknowledged, for the first time, that it needed to contemplate selling selected works, and in 1990 a de-accession committee was formed to implement such a policy. In fact, a number of less significant paintings had already been sold. These were from the CSA’s Hire Collection which had been established in 1971 with minor collection works hired out to businesses to free up storage space. However, by 1988 it had become an important source of revenue and additional purchases in the interim period meant that the gallery held numerous paintings of limited aesthetic merit. For this reason, in October 1988 a decision was made to auction 72 works without reserves. The resolution was approved by the council, although dissent was expressed by Alison Ryde and David Sheppard. The Society’s Articles of Association (1889) did, however, include provision for such measures.

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12 Christopher Taylor to John Coley, 12 April 1991, Director’s Folder 1993-1995, Box No. 56, CAG 1.
13 CSA minutes, 9 June 1983.
15 De-accessioning Committee minutes, 19 March 1990, De-accession Folder, Box No. 71, CAG 1.
17 CSA minutes, 20 October 1988.
18 Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Canterbury Society of Arts, Christchurch: Wyatt and Wilson, 1959, p. 3, 3-12 ‘To sell or otherwise dispose of any works of art belonging to the Society from time to time, or to exchange the same for other works of art.’
The decision to sell works may have been partially influenced by the CSA’s first annual loss for eleven years of $8,800.\textsuperscript{19} A further deficit of $16,599 in 1989 prompted the de-accession committee’s resolution to identify paintings considered suitable for sale.\textsuperscript{20} Following its first meeting in March 1990, the committee listed nineteen works from the CSA’s collection at the McDougall Gallery that met its criteria.\textsuperscript{21} However, some reservations were again expressed and it was suggested that any move to sell Hodgkins’s \textit{Barn, Picardy} should be referred to the full council.\textsuperscript{22}

This acknowledgement that the Society held responsibilities towards the care of its collection also informed CSA director Christopher Taylor’s commentary in the gallery’s magazine \textit{Preview} in 1991. In a letter to the Society’s accountant John Wilson he presented a draft, outlining his views:

There has… been a desire by the CSA Council to place the CSA in a position of strength and relevance to the 1990’s and beyond. At the 1989 Think Tank, an annual CSA Council conference, a number of issues came into focus. As a result a comprehensive Business Plan for the next three years was written by the director. After lengthy debate spanning four meetings and some changes, it was ratified in July 1990. The collection was then reviewed under criteria outlined in the policy. The criteria enabled the recently formed Deaccessioning [sic] Committee to identify works that could be sold…. The objective will be to ensure its future as cultural heritage for the members of the CSA and the people of Christchurch.\textsuperscript{23}

Taylor was a graduate of the University of Canterbury School and was appointed director in November 1986, following Barron’s resignation. (Plate 39) His policies were to be critical to the establishment of a course of action for de-accession and ultimately, the sale of selected works to the Civic Trust. Taylor had worked as a photographer and art teacher, as well as in part-time employment at the CSA as

\textsuperscript{19} CSA minutes, 10 November 1988.
\textsuperscript{20} Annual General Meeting minutes, 29 November 1989.
\textsuperscript{21} De-accessioning Committee minutes, 19 March 1990, Box No. 71, CAG 1.
\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{23} Taylor to John Wilson, 5 June 1991, Director’s Folder 1992-1993, Box No. 56, CAG1.
Plate No. 39. The cover of Preview for November 1990 celebrated the CSA’s 110 year history of supporting the arts in Canterbury. This photograph taken on the roof of the Gloucester Street gallery shows the staff, from left: Suzi Mellop, Blair Jackson, Grania McKenzie, Grant Banbury, Sharyn Creighton, Rona Rose, and Christopher Taylor.
exhibitions officer.\textsuperscript{24} As director, he sought to confront the competition of emerging dealer galleries by promoting emerging and established artists.\textsuperscript{25} Barron had worked to include amateur and professional artists, but Taylor’s exhibition policy was more aggressively focussed on raising standards. However, he also recalls that on her resignation, Barron indicated to him that there needed to be significant change if the CSA was to survive:

The general impression was that... [the CSA] was stuck in a time warp. It seemed dominated by a kind of craft guild culture. Craft was much stronger then than it is now [2007] and the Crafts Council held some authority. [Exhibitions officer] Grant Banbury and Nola had a strong bias towards it. All those factors and the very strong presence of the working members’ needs, as well as Doris Lusk and the Council support for craft were important. Nola kind of signalled that to me. As I recall, she had some misgivings about the CSA’s future and direction.... There was too much reverence surrounding the working members. [There was an attitude that] the Society was the reason it existed and the backbone as to why it existed. Nola indicated that it needed to change and I took that on board. They were a thorn in the side of the image of the art world and the image needed to be re-branded and addressed and it should happen on a number of fronts. [However] it was not simply out with the old and in with the new. For many people Nola and Grant were the CSA. It was conservative. It was very much a part of conservative Christchurch. People like John Trengrove and Miles Warren. They were well mannered. [It was like]... being appointed the director of the Royal Academy. I was offered membership of the Christchurch Club. It was blue rinse and that was where people wanted it to be.\textsuperscript{26}

Taylor made it very clear that working members must accept more rigorous selection processes. In July 1988 he wrote to artist Sylvia Riley:

For a number of years the CSA had had a somewhat passive role in defining its exhibition schedule, and many artists [sic] exhibitions were shown that weren’t

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Press}, 26 November 1986, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{26} Interview, Christopher Taylor, 22 June 2007.
ready for exposure. That has changed, and that message is a consistent one to artists.27

At the same time he encouraged positive relationships with professional artists. Neil Frazer had exhibited with the Brooke Gifford Gallery from 1983 and Taylor offered him opportunities in solo and group shows at the CSA, impressing upon him the advantages of an association with established names.28

This was followed by an approach to the recently-appointed School of Fine Arts senior lecturer in painting, Riduan Tomkins, offering students a discount of 50% from rental fees to exhibit at the CSA.29 Taylor sought to establish a perception that the Society was characterised by a high degree of professionalism. In a letter to emerging artist Kim Pieter in 1989, he drew attention to the quality of its exhibition schedule:

...exhibitions in 1990 include: Robert McLeod and Jack Forrest, a Retrospective, Olivia Spencer-Bower, Garden Works, Michael Reed, Recent works, German Graphics of the 1970s, Janet Paul, paintings, Crafts Council 1990, Text and Image Concrete Poetry Doris Lusk, The list goes on. If you do decide to exhibit at the CSA, please let me know as soon as possible so I can arrange a booking.30

Taylor was keen to cultivate such relationships, seeking to establish the Society as a dealer gallery capable of representing the work of leading New Zealand artists.31 He was firmly committed to professionalism in the arts and to the support of serious artists. In June 1988 he endorsed a proposal from the director of the Wellington City

27 Taylor to Sylvia Riley, 4 July 1988, Director's Correspondence 1988-1993, Box No. 57, CAG 1.
28 Taylor to Neil Frazer, 26 March 1987, Director's Correspondence 1987-1994, Box 56, CAG 1. Taylor also mentions Chris Booth, Paul Johns and Freerick Hundertwasser, although Hundertwasser did not exhibit at the CSA.
29 Taylor to Riduan Tomkins, 28 April 1987, Director's Correspondence 1987-1994, Box No. 56, CAG 1.
30 Taylor to Kim Pieter, 21 April 1989, Director's Correspondence, 1987-1994, Box No. 56, CAG 1 and Preview, September-October 1989, No. 149, p. 8. Pieter did take up his offer, exhibiting at the CSA in October 1989.
31 Gordon Crook to Taylor, 19 June 1990, Director's Correspondence 1990, CAG 1, Box No. 56, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu. Angela Burns to Taylor, 26 February 1992, Director's Correspondence, 1988-1993, Box No. 57, CAG 1. Taylor wrote to artists such as Gordon Crook and Angela Burns, inviting them to be represented by the CSA.
Art Gallery, John Leuthart, to curate a survey exhibition of Christchurch artists. Taylor recommended the city’s leading practitioners, many represented by local dealer galleries. His commitment to professionalism meant that he was also critical of respected institutions that he felt were negligent in their duties. Under Barron’s directorship the Society had provided rent-free exhibition spaces, ensuring the School of Fine Arts’ ongoing participation in the CSA exhibition programme. However, Taylor responded sharply to a late cancellation of a graduate show in 1988, informing senior lecturer in sculpture Tom Taylor of his annoyance at student indifference towards the Society’s generosity:

Approximately 6 months ago I was approached by a group of students in the sculpture course at Ilam. A definite booking was made for the Mair Gallery on the 11 July. In line with the CSA policy, no charge was made for rental or power to the students. Approximately 2 weeks ago, I was informed by their representative by telephone that they had decided to cancel their booking, because “they hadn’t got the work together.” As a consequence we were left with an empty major gallery space with little prospect of hiring it. It seems to me that students need to be informed as part of their course, that some degree of professionalism is required when dealing with businesses or institutions outside the University. In future because of unfortunate dealings with Ilam students in the past we will be charging a booking fee and rental for exhibitions…. Previously we have moved other artists’ shows to allow for student exhibitions to be placed into our exhibitions schedule due to late notices. This will no longer be the case. I suggest that if students are interested in exhibiting at the CSA Gallery, they would be wiser advised to book a year in advance.

Taylor’s agenda for change also involved seeking out new opportunities to increase gallery visitors and membership. In 1988 Wellington restaurateur Richard Till

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32 Taylor to John Leuthart, 23 June 1988, Director’s Correspondence 1988-1993, Box 57, CAG 1. Taylor’s list included Grant Banbury, Graham Bennet [sic] Rudi Boelee, Catherine Brough, Joanna Braithwaite, Gary Collins, Bing Dawe, Neil Dawson, Margaret Dawson, Neil Frazer, Ross Gray, Roger Hickin, Doris Holland, Margaret Hudson-Ware, John Hurrell, Murray Hedwig, Paul Johns, Morgan Jones, Mark Lander, Grant Lingard, Quentin Macfarlane, Trevor Moffitt, Julia Morison, Simon Ogden, Don Peebles, Alan Pearson, Peter Ransom, Pauline Rhodes, William Sutton, Philip Trusttum, Bianca van Rangelrooy, Martin Whitworth and Peter Wolden. However, there is no record of such an exhibition taking place.

33 Taylor to Tom Taylor, 12 September 1988, Director’s Correspondence 1988-1993, Box No. 56, CAG 1.
expressed interest in establishing a restaurant in the lower level of the CSA gallery. Responding very positively, Taylor saw the potential to create a unique venue in Christchurch which would benefit from Till’s background in catering and events management. 34 Intentions to establish a café in the gallery were included in wider plans for gallery renovations. In January 1989 Taylor relocated an exhibition by artist David Thomas from the Front Gallery to the Mezzanine level of the building, informing him that the downstairs gallery was being converted into a café to open in March 1989. 35 However, such plans were never realised, even though the concept of a gallery café remained paramount to proposed alterations over the following next five years. 36

Taylor also sought to raise the CSA’s profile through his position as a member of the New Zealand Art Gallery Directors’ Exhibition Planning Committee. Appointed in 1988, the role provided him with an involvement in the administration of local and international touring exhibitions. 37 He secured a number of notable shows for the Society, including a survey show of contemporary textile art from France in 1987, 38 and 40 Years of British Sculpture with work by Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth in 1990. 39 Other important touring shows at the CSA during Taylor’s directorship included the 1989 United Group’s Modern Masters Collection of contemporary New Zealand artists 40 which encompassed work by Gretchen Albrecht, Bill Hammond, Ralph Hotere and Richard Killeen. 41 Taylor also assumed an authoritative role by accompanying local art enthusiasts to Auckland in 1989 to visit the Reader’s Digest Collection which was described as the most valuable art exhibition to come to New Zealand, with work by Degas, Monet and Renoir. 42 He perceived such tours as a way to create additional revenue streams and he wrote to Guthrey Travel following the exhibition that with ‘consistency and the right events’ the market for such tours would

34 Richard Till to Taylor, 14 April 1988, Director’s Correspondence 1987-1994, Box No. 56, CAG 1.
35 Taylor to David Thomas, 24 January 1989, Director’s Correspondence 1987-1994, Box No. 56, CAG 1.
36 CSA minutes, 24 March 1994.
37 Susan Foster (Executive Officer NZAGDC) to Taylor, 16 March 1988, Director’s Correspondence 1988-1993, Box No. 56, CAG 1.
42 Preview, March-April 1989, No. 145, p. 16.
grow.\textsuperscript{43} Taylor’s ideas were welcomed by the Society’s council. His successor, Nigel Buxton, recalls that compared with Barron, ‘Chris had a different attitude. He was more out there and was a lot more savvy about how the art world operated.’\textsuperscript{44}

Critical to Taylor’s vision were his plans to renovate the Gloucester Street gallery. In a brief to the CSA council in September 1988, he detailed the limitations of the building and the lack of maintenance since its opening:

The CSA Gallery building was completed in January 1968, over 20 years ago.... there are many aspects of the interior design that mitigate against a welcoming public environment, and a pleasant work place.... From the street the gallery presents an austere and forbidding image. The darkness of the foyer area and front window emphasises a private feel to the gallery (exclusive club).... The public (and many members) enter the gallery with trepidation and then wonder where to go..... Fundamentally the building is not working as a venue that welcomes people to have an experience with the visual arts.... The refurbishment plan scheduled for completion by the end of 1990 addresses the problems of the gallery environment. This has been recognised by the CSA Council as a priority with a budget of $144,000 allocated at the Finance Committee and Council meetings on the 9th June 1988.\textsuperscript{45}

It was proposed to spend $24,000 to upgrade the Selling Gallery and Stock Room, $77,000 on the foyer, Front Gallery, Canaday Gallery and office area, and to install a café. In addition, the upstairs galleries were to be renovated for a total cost of $42,500.\textsuperscript{46} Renovations began in late 1988 and were completed over the following two years. In January 1990 Taylor summarised progress:

The more apparent changes to the gallery visitor are the resurfaced walls and new hanging systems in the downstairs galleries providing a high standard of presentation. The foyer has been retiled.... The whole gallery interior has been repainted, presenting a clean fresh environment. Behind the scenes,

\textsuperscript{43} Taylor to John Marshall, Guthrey Travel, 8 June 1989, Director’s Correspondence 1987-1994, Box No. 56, CAG 1.
\textsuperscript{44} Interview, Nigel Buxton, 22 May 2007.
\textsuperscript{45} CSA refurbishment Brief: 13 September 1988, Director’s Correspondence 1988-1993, Box 57, CAG 1.
\textsuperscript{46} CSA minutes, 9 June 1988 and 10 November 1988.
Refurbishments were undertaken with funds accumulated under Barron’s directorship. Decreasing interest rates following the 1987 share market crash made investment income less significant to the annual budget and the council decided that reserve funds would be better placed in capital works projects. In total the renovations cost the Society $82,000, assisted by a successful application for a grant of $7,000 from the Lottery Board. When Taylor resigned as director in 1993, among his achievements was listed the ‘significant refurbishment of the Gallery which resulted in better conditions for display and storage of artworks.’

The renovations and changes in exhibition policy undertaken in the late 1980s and early 1990s were certainly necessary. However, the image of the Society remained largely unchanged and many members were unhappy with Taylor’s policies. A survey of 278 members in 1991 confirmed that most of them wanted a return to an ‘art society or club atmosphere’ and they were critical of the selection process for exhibitions.

Other findings established:

CSA members are middle aged and almost 50% are over 55 years.... The overwhelming majority of members do not come to openings.... The membership is made up of a core group that have been members for 4 or more years.... Generally our exhibitions are too “highbrow” or “abstract” for members and there is a demand for more traditional art and crafts.... There is a low level of buying from members. 70% of respondents had spent less than $500 in two years at the CSA on art works. The survey indicates that there is art purchased from other galleries by members and that there is no loyalty to purchase at the CSA.

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48 Interview, Taylor, 22 June 2007.  
50 Preview, April–May 1993, No. 176, Inserted note.  
52 Ibid.
Indeed, exhibitions that generated revenue for the CSA were generally not by leading contemporary New Zealand artists, but still by respected working members such as Austen Deans. He held a group exhibition with other family members, recording sales of $31,000 in February 1991.\textsuperscript{53} Moreover, in 1987 the drop in the market value of art had exacerbated the Society’s financial situation.\textsuperscript{54} The council held a series of annual ‘think tanks’ to formulate policy and review strategies between 1988 and 1991.\textsuperscript{55} The most important of these was the 1989 meeting in which a long-term strategy was shaped as a business plan in July 1990.\textsuperscript{56} The accompanying mission statement was both pragmatic and philosophical. It stated that the CSA existed:

\begin{quote}
To provide an art gallery and gallery services of the highest quality where artists exhibit and sell their work and promote the patronage, practice and study of the visual arts in Canterbury.\textsuperscript{57}
\end{quote}

The plan focused on improving the quality of the gallery’s exhibitions programme and extending its profile through appropriate curatorial policies and the relocation of amateur exhibitions to the mezzanine level of the building.\textsuperscript{58} Membership would be increased through greater marketing of its benefits. In addition, it was proposed to establish links with the Christchurch City Council, central government agencies and local businesses to secure support and sponsorship. Finally, the collection policy would be re-defined with a number of works de-accessioned. The procedure would be drafted by the director.\textsuperscript{59} Overall, this long-term plan crystallised the ideas that had been discussed and formulated over the previous two years in a single document.

Admirable though they were, none of these strategies were successfully realised. The CSA simply faced too many challenges from the growing number of specialist art galleries and institutions, and an ongoing erosion of its status. The Society’s diminishing reputation was due to a specialisation and arts professionalism that was rapidly eclipsing the traditional way in which the CSA’s had supported both amateur

\textsuperscript{53} CSA minutes, 21 February 1991.
\textsuperscript{54} CSA minutes, 10 December 1987.
\textsuperscript{55} CSA minutes, 11 August 1988, 12 July 1989 and 19 December 1991.
\textsuperscript{56} Taylor to John Wilson, 8 July 1990, Directors’ Folder 1991-1993, Box 56, CAG 1.
\textsuperscript{57} Taylor to Wilson, 8 June 1990, Directors’ Folder 1991-1993, Box No. 56, CAG 1.
\textsuperscript{58} This put the members’ exhibitions largely out of sight to the casual public.
\textsuperscript{59} Taylor to Wilson, 8 June 1990, Directors’ Folder 1991-1993, Box No. 56, CAG 1.
and serious working artists. Although Taylor worked to change the exhibition programme and commonly held perceptions about the CSA, the task proved overwhelming, not only because of changes taking place within the art community, but also because he and the council were hindered by a widespread belief, especially among members themselves, in the Society's historical importance and invulnerability. To some extent Taylor himself shared and certainly understood this belief. Although he sought change, he also recognised that the CSA remained fundamentally conservative because 'blue rinse,' was 'where people wanted it to be.' This opinion is also confirmed by former senior lecturer in sculpture at the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts, Andrew Drummond, who also maintains that the support of an educated and affluent middle-class in Christchurch guaranteed the CSA's authority in a way that was unique in New Zealand:

In Christchurch it [the art society] mattered but nowhere else. The middle class of Christchurch were more visually literate. Elsewhere in the country it was not important... it [the CSA] had a very powerful role until the end of the 1970s.60

The CSA council's belief in the authority of its history was certainly evident in what proved to be the failed attempt to revive the annual 1930s Society's ball as a prestigious social occasion.61 A large scale contemporary ball was held at the gallery in 1991 with the exhibition spaces transformed and themed by events designer Richard Till. (Plate 40) The gallery's magazine proudly declared:

The CSA Ball is back – with a vengeance! For the first time in more than thirty years, the Arts Ball, which was so popular in the 1920s and 30s, is being reborn.... Gallery Director, Chris Taylor, says.... "We're reviving it so that the gallery can be more of a focal point. While patrons may feel that exhibition openings fulfill their social expectations of the CSA, we want to extend our identity further.... He says the overwhelming response to the CSA's centenary, and its 110th anniversary last year was also a reminder of its past social profile.... champagne will flow freely.62

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60 Interview, Drummond, 10 May 2007.
61 CSA minutes, 21 June 1990.
Plate No. 40. Contemporary Ball, CSA gallery 20 July 1991. The lights and projections were by events designer, Richard Till.
The Society was confident of success, allocating $34,000 to transform the gallery’s interior with ‘a grand ballroom effect using chandeliers, flowers, giant silk bows, and cream and gold colouring.’\textsuperscript{63} Although the CSA’s annual operations budget prior to the ball was already $16,898 in arrears,\textsuperscript{64} the council hoped to make a profit of $3,350.\textsuperscript{65} However, the venture was a financial failure, while a letter from K. J. Turner maintained that it did not meet expectations:

> The food, for the short period it was available, was appalling. One had to stop and chew through a hamburger or pizza for about 10 minutes without even a plate being supplied to rest it on. This to then be followed up with a peanut slab.... The epitome of the evening was Martin McPherson at what he considered was the end of the function telling us “to go home to the lovely homes he was sure we’d have”, making the evening truly memorable for what it was – a rip off – for which we would very much like a refund.\textsuperscript{66}

In August that year Taylor summarised the CSA’s financial position as ‘the worst ever,’ with the ball incurring a loss of $4,100, contributing to an anticipated debt of $40,000.\textsuperscript{67} However, the council agreed that the ball should be maintained as part of a strategy to extend the Society’s profile. Buxton recalls that it was intended to ‘get the movers and shakers back into the gallery,’\textsuperscript{68} but the 1992 audit report was less generous in its assessment. It noted:

> Despite strong ticket sales of say 450 it is expected that after all other recoveries are accounted for, we will suffer a financial loss of at least $3,300.... We can identify at least two shortcomings in the pre-ball estimates of expenditure, namely: (a) We did not identify all of the heads of expenses… (b) We did not accurately identify the cost per head on a per ticket basis… For all of that, the ball was as an entertainment event a spectacular success and post-ball “polls” indicate very strong support for a similar event next year....

\textsuperscript{63} CSA minutes, 21 March 1991.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{65} ‘Proposal for Arts Ball,’ Director’s Folder 1991-1993, Box No. 56, CAG 1.
\textsuperscript{66} K. J. Turner to the CSA, 22 July 1991, Directors’ Correspondence 988-1993, Box 57, CAG 1. There is no evidence of a reply to Turner’s complaints from the CSA.
\textsuperscript{67} CSA minutes, 15 August 1991.
\textsuperscript{68} Interview, Buxton, 22 May 2007.
This year’s loss was in hindsight clearly avoidable had we accurately projected expenditure.\textsuperscript{69}

Two subsequent balls were no more successful, and in 1993 the question was finally asked as to why resources were being put into an activity that did not directly relate to exhibitions and was failing to increase membership or raise revenue.\textsuperscript{70} Might not the volume of work it entailed be better used elsewhere?\textsuperscript{71} In 1994, the ball was cancelled as it did not ‘justify the work or financial risk. Making exhibition openings more lively, could be a better alternative.’\textsuperscript{72}

While the CSA ball sought to revive the spirit of its past achievements, new dealer galleries in Christchurch seemed to be more focussed on the specialist representation of artists’ work. Indeed, whereas previously the Society had held exhibitions of painting, pottery, printmaking, woodcraft and glass, artists now preferred more dedicated spaces that focused exclusively on their practice. The Manawa and James Paul galleries opened in 1985 and featured artists such as Ronnie van Hout\textsuperscript{73} and its successor, the James Paul Gallery, exhibited work by emerging artists such as Ruth Watson and Linda James.\textsuperscript{74} Among the new dealer galleries that emerged during this period were The Arthouse in Durham Street opened by writer and artist Jen Hudson in 1987,\textsuperscript{75} the Jonathan Jensen Gallery in High Street, established by art history graduates Jonathan Smart and Andrew Jensen in March 1988,\textsuperscript{76} the Canterbury Gallery in Papanui Road, opened by entrepreneur Pat Condon in September 1988,\textsuperscript{77} the Ferner Gallery in Victoria Street, opened by businessman Peter Jarvis in March 1990,\textsuperscript{78} the Salamander Gallery (formerly the Gingko Gallery) in the Arts Centre which was taken over by craft artist Noeline Brokenshire in July 1990,\textsuperscript{79} the Exposures Art Gallery on the third floor of Strange’s Building in High Street, opened

\textsuperscript{70} CSA minutes, 14 December 1993.
\textsuperscript{71} CSA minutes, 21 October 1993.
\textsuperscript{72} CSA minutes, 26 May 1994.
\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Press}, 28 October 1987, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{76} \textit{Press}, 23 March 1988, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{77} \textit{Press}, 7 September 1988, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Press}, 18 July 1990, p. 28.
by artists Belinda Nicolls and Phil Tumataroa, opening in February 1991, the Quality Street Gallery, established by a group of Canterbury artists in February 1991, the Dobson Bashford Gallery on Peterborough Street, opened by Philippa Dobson and Sue Bashford in March 1991, and the PKF Gallery in Armagh Street, opened by former CSA council member Bruce Finnerty in December 1991. In June 1991 the Arts Diary in The Press listed exhibitions for 24 galleries retailing paintings, ceramics, jewellery, design, photography and contemporary art. The Society now operated in a highly competitive environment alongside galleries in smaller venues with less building maintenance and fewer overheads. Furthermore, ambitious younger artists found the newly established galleries a welcome alternative to the long-established CSA. While the Society had long been the gallery for art school graduates to hold their first solo exhibitions, they now found other spaces with a perceived similar prestige. In 1988 the newly established Jonathan Jensen Gallery featured an exhibition of fourth-year painting students from the School of Fine Arts, and in 1992 the High Street Project opened as an artists-run gallery, predominantly exhibiting work by sculpture graduates. Within 18 months it had established a presence as the dominant venue for emerging artists. Its temporary closure in 1994 was regretted by the Press arts reviewer, Robyn Ussher, who commented that ‘another loss to the art scene came in September [1994], with the closure of the High Street Project…. Where are these artists to show next year? A space is desperately needed.’ Her concern over the absence of such a gallery reveals just how far the CSA’s presence in the art community had been eroded.

Probably the most significant challenge to the Society’s authority came from CSA council member and longtime director of the McDougall Gallery, John Coley. His gallery’s exhibition programmes, its membership-based Friends of the McDougall Gallery, and its designated contemporary art space, the McDougall Art Annex, further diminished the Society’s position. Coley had been appointed director of the McDougall Gallery in November 1980, a move which met with the unconditional

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81 Press, 6 March 1991, p. 22.
84 Press, 12 October 1988, p. 23.
approval of the CSA president Derek Hargreaves, who made specific mention of Coley’s long-standing involvement with the Society at the opening of its centennial exhibition:

John has had close connections with the CSA – He has been on the Council for some years and is presently a Vice President.... We know that we can look forward to a very close liaison with the McDougall during his time as Director.  

Coley remained on the CSA council for the following ten years, resigning in June 1990, stating that he looked forward to ‘continued association with the Society as a member and by continuing to promote the good working relationship that exists between the Society and the McDougall.’  

At the public gallery he consolidated the impressive exhibition schedule established by his predecessor, Rodney Wilson. International exhibitions in 1988 included a survey show of prints by Edward Munch, followed by a series of 29 prints by Italian post-modern artist Mimmo Paladino, and in 1989, an exhibition by Duane Hanson.  

While survey shows of contemporary New Zealand art such as the Montana Lindaer Art Award had previously been held at the CSA, from 1989 the prestigious Moet and Chandon Art Award and similar touring exhibitions became a regular part of the public gallery’s programme.  

More directly challenging to the Society’s influence was Coley’s commitment to the Friends of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery. Established under the directorship of Brian Muir in 1971, Coley sought to model its growth on similarly successful groups in the United States:

It would be a group of citizens who could advocate for a new gallery and the gallery’s interests. I wanted this organisation to attract Gifts, Wills and provide strong support and this was not a unique idea. I had travelled through America and seen these organisations in existence. It was a way individuals could

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87 Derek Hargreaves, Draft address at the Robert McDougall Art Gallery to open the CSA’s Centennial Exhibition, undated, Derek Hargreaves CSA file, Newspaper cuttings and talks, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu.
volunteer to give their support and influence to the gallery and it was established as an entirely independent entity to the gallery.93

The Chair of the Christchurch Civic Art Gallery Trust, Chris Brocket, maintains that the sense of community and commitment to the public gallery that Coley encouraged among the Friends, however unintentionally, undermined a significant section of the CSA’s membership who no longer felt supported by the Society under Taylor’s directorship. In addition, while the Society’s subscriptions increased in the early 1990s to address growing financial difficulties, the Friends’ donation remained the same. Brocket recalls:

The period in which the friends grew at this time represented a swing of power. The CSA membership had always been greater and the Friends were the underdog. John Coley put energy into building the Friends and there was a slow swing away from the CSA towards the Friends.94

From 1988 to 1991 the Friends’ numbers grew from 560 to more than 700 members.95

If its success challenged the Society’s membership, then the CSA’s role as an advocate for contemporary art was further diminished by Coley’s establishment in October 1988 of a designated contemporary art space, the McDougall Art Annex in the Arts Centre of Christchurch. While the CSA had maintained a reputation for its support of local contemporary art, the Annex now presented a prestigious alternative. Its staff was able to research, curate, design and publish accompanying catalogues for exhibitions, showcasing arts practice in a way that was beyond the CSA’s resources. Taylor notes that in retrospect the Annex weakened the Society’s status:

The CSA’s openings were huge at this time [the late 1980s] with 200 to 300 people attending. In addition, the Society also held touring exhibitions from the British Council and the New Zealand Art Gallery Directors Council....

93 Interview, John Coley, 13 July 2007.
94 Interview, Chris Brocket, 10 July 2007.
However, to a point, the opening of the Annex had an impact and I may have underestimated that impact.96

Indicative of these changing roles, the arts pages of the Press on 18 October 1988 reported on the opening of the Annex beside an accompanying article about a CSA exhibition of work by three student friends from the School of Art in the 1940s, who were exhibiting landscape and figure paintings together for the first time.97 Former lecturer, Peter Simpson, praised the Annex for its potential to embrace contemporary art: ‘The McDougall Art Gallery has finally burst out of its straitjacket, escaped from the Gardens and invaded the city proper.’98 By the late 1980s the CSA could no longer be considered a stand-in public gallery as it had been throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

In these deteriorating circumstances, revenue fell and increasingly the CSA’s permanent collection appeared a dormant asset that could be better used to reinvigorate the ailing institution. Taylor recalls:

From about 1992 [sic] I had come to the conclusion that for the CSA to operate with no funding and loaning [sic] paintings with no hire fee made no sense.99 I raised that with John Wilson and Iain Harvey and they agreed… What are we doing with a collection? We needed money for structural changes to take us forward… However, it always came back [from Council discussion] that no one was prepared to do anything about it. Big issues only got dealt with when they reached a crisis. I was never deeply concerned about the financial status of the CSA. We had money in the bank, a collection we could sell and the recession was starting to lift.100

From 1989 to 1994 the CSA’s cumulative debt totalled $145,000. Renovations to the building completed in 1990 had made little apparent difference to the Society’s

96 Interview, Taylor, 22 June 2007.
97 Press, 19 October 1988, p. 22.
98 Ibid.
99 A de-accession committee to consider the CSA’s collection was formed in March 1990.
100 Interview, Taylor, 22 June 2007 and David Stock (Buddle Findlay) to Simon Marks, 25 September 1995, AO 18 CSA Filing Cabinet, Centre of Contemporary Art (COCA). The art market remained relatively depressed until the late 1990s and negotiations for the CSA’s collection were to reflect this. The Christchurch Civic Art Gallery Trust maintained that it was not the best of times to sell a significant body of art works.
circumstances. De-accessioning selected works – selling the family silver, if you like - meant that the CSA could free up urgently needed capital. Its role in maintaining a public collection was now widely perceived as ‘something of an anachronism.’

Taylor had provided some forewarning of such circumstances in his article detailing the collection’s history in Preview in June 1991. This had been based on discussions held over the previous twelve months by a de-accession committee which included council members Banbury, William Cumming, John Coley, Iain Harvey, Marks, John MacIntosh, Penny Orme, Stuart Page, Bill Parsons, Sheppard and John Wilson. The committee was divided between those who perceived the CSA as a business in financial difficulty and those who maintained that its history made it a moral obligation to retain the collection. However, both sides acknowledged that the sale of some works, even if only minor, was necessary. Taylor maintained that the CSA had built up a large capital reserve through its collection and it was a ‘business which is running at a loss.’ He stated ‘we can go into being a business or not.’ Page reinforced such ideas and argued that the investment of such an asset was a way to continue to support the arts:

... we have in the permanent collection paintings to the value of something like $1 million. This investment is not producing any income.... If an organisation cannot be substantially self-funding year by year then it should go out of existence or trim its operation to a size the current members are prepared to pay for... A prudent organisation would have some reserves to carry them [sic] over a lean period of two or three years, but – in my opinion – for no longer.... My view is that the Permanent Collection should be placed in a trust fund.... I am unable to think of a better description of the purposes of the fund than “the promotion of Art in Canterbury”...

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101 Christchurch Civic Art Gallery Trust. Proposal to The New Zealand Lottery Grants Board, Undated [1995], Box No. 25, CAG 31, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu.
102 Taylor to John Wilson, 5 June 1991, Director’s folder 1991–1993, Box No. 56, CAG 1.
103 Meeting Called to discuss De-accessioning Policy, 12 July 1990, Director’s Folder 1991–1993, Box No. 56, CAG 1.
104 Ibid.
105 Ibid.
106 David Page, ‘De-Accession policy,’ De-accession Folders, Hamada and Frith, Box No. 71, CAG 1.
Coley and Cumming maintained that the CSA must acknowledge its historical duty to those who had developed the collection over previous generations. Their argument was embedded in the Society's historical importance and an assumption of its continued invulnerability. Coley maintained:

The Society holds an important place in the history of the region, its gallery and collection are seen as being semi-public in character. For half of its existence the CSA was the only gallery in the region... Because it was seen by many people as an organisation in the service of the public, it received many bequests, grants and donations intended for the acquisition of works of art for public, and not for private benefit. The Society of Arts presented a substantial number of works to the McDougall Gallery to lay a basis for its Canterbury collection and has continued to entrust works to the gallery.... For many years and for many reasons the city was unable to collect works which tell the narrative of the development of the visual arts in Canterbury. The Society’s acquisitions over the years has [sic] recorded this narrative.... Although the writer is not a disinterested party, I hope it is apparent that the views set out above are based upon the Society’s historical role in Canterbury and the mutual interest which the two major and complementary art galleries have in preserving for the public benefit the record of achievement of the region’s artists... My recommendation is that the Society retain its historically important works.107

All parties finally agreed that a limited number of works would be de-accessioned and that funds would contribute to further acquisitions and the financial development of the Society.108 Works for disposal would fall into three categories; those by New Zealand artists accomplished overseas, works by New Zealand artists with little relevance to Canterbury’s history and those that fitted into both these categories but which required further research.109 Discussions identified works that were of limited historical value. These consisted of a number of nineteenth-century paintings by Royal Academy artists and works by New Zealand artists outside Canterbury. In August 1991 Banbury wrote to galleries throughout the country offering fifteen works

107 John Coley, 'Memorandum on De-accessioning the CSA Collection,' Special Meeting, 12 July 1990, Director's Folder 1993–1995, Box No. 56, CAG 1.
108 Special Meeting, 12 July 1990, De-accession Folders, Hamada and Frith, Box No. 71, CAG 1.
109 De-accessioning Committee Meeting, 19 March 1990, De-accession Folders, Hamada and Frith, Box No. 71 CAG 1.
for sale, including Robert Ellis's *Orange River Bypassing City*, Ralph Hotere's *Black Painting*, Colin McCahon's *Landscape North Otago*, (which was offered for sale at $55,000), Mervyn Taylor's *Cove* and M. T. Woollaston's *Taramakau III*. A number of these were purchased for public collections outside Christchurch, including Taylor's *Cove* which was acquired by the Auckland City Art Gallery for $6,000 (plus GST) and Lois White's *Self Portrait* which was purchased by the National Art Gallery for $11,000. In addition, the CSA also de-accessioned a bottle by Japanese ceramicist Shoji Hamada acquired from an exhibition of his work at the Canterbury Museum in 1965 and a painting by Victorian artist W. P. Frith, *Beware* (1899) at Sotheby's.

The sale of these and other works was of immediate and serious concern to Coley and Roberts, who recalls that he 'thought that this was the beginning of it. We were concerned that [the McDougall Gallery] might lose some works to other public collections.' As the public gallery had exhibited and cared for works from the Society’s collection over the previous 20 years, the idea of facing a bidding war with other galleries and private collectors was unpalatable. With few choices left to improve the CSA’s financial situation, they had good reason to be worried. With the annual debt at $43,000 one month out from the end of its financial year, in September 1992, Taylor presented a plan of action to fit expenditure to income which necessitated a reduction in staffing, including the termination of Banbury’s position as consultant. Banbury had worked at the gallery since 1978, initially tutoring art classes and later as a gallery technician and curator. In June 1991 he was appointed consultant, following the retirement of Rona Rose, and the decision to terminate his position was made, however conveniently, on the basis of the short

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110 Banbury to Peter Shaw, Art Curator, Fletcher Challenge, 11 October 1991, De-accession Folders, Hamada and Frith, Box No. 71, CAG 1.
111 Draft letter by Banbury to public galleries, 16 August 1991, De-accession Folders, Hamada and Frith, Box No. 71, CAG 1.
114 Sotheby's to Banbury, 23 September 1991, and Kate Roger to Banbury, 12 June 1992, De-accession Folders, Hamada and Frith, Box No. 71, CAG 1. The Hamada ceramic was sold for £1,900.
115 Interview, Neil Roberts, 1 June 2007.
117 CSA minutes, 9 February 1978.
tenure of his services in this last role. However, his long-standing association with the CSA meant that to many in the art community he represented the gallery’s identity. While their concern was sincere and predictable, it reflected little awareness of the Society’s financial plight. Local art world figures, including Barron, Margaret Hudson-Ware, John Hurrell and Ted Bracey, all wrote to Taylor in protest. Buxton recalls that Bracey maintained ‘Grant was the CSA,’ and that the ‘shit hit the fan’ when Taylor fired him. Undoubtedly, the decision to make his position redundant, further alienated sections of the art community at a time when the CSA could least afford to do so.

Although Taylor had sought to raise exhibition standards, by 1993 financial pressures meant that gallery’s rental fees were accepted with little thought for the quality of the work. Buxton recalls:

Chris wanted to get out [of the CSA] and it had gone from being a useful and exciting institution and it was assailed from all sides. Artists were moving away and not treating it as serious or wanting to be associated with it.... The CSA had lost its curatorial credibility.... When I took over there were no artists of any calibre [and] the exhibition programme was ho hum. Chris had started selling wall space and this was fatal. At the time I started, the problem of the lack of respect was a core reason for its lack of performance.... [By 1993] the CSA could not entertain the serious art community.

Nigel Buxton was appointed director of the CSA, following Taylor’s resignation in May 1993 when the latter took up a position at Webbs in Auckland. (Plate 41) Buxton had worked as an auctioneer for Christies in London prior to emigrating to New Zealand in 1981. He was a professional artist who lectured in drawing at the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts from 1989 until 1990. When he assumed the directorship, the CSA’s reputation and public profile were at their lowest.

119 Interview, Taylor, 22 June 2007.
120 CSA minutes, 15 October 1992.
121 Interview, Buxton, 22 May 2007.
122 Ibid.
124 C. R. Barnes, Bluebeard’s Castle, Christchurch: Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, 2003.
Plate No. 41. Director Nigel Buxton in the renovated Mair Gallery and the opening exhibition at the Centre of Contemporary Art, *Drawing out of Context*, 20 June-14 July 1996.
The Society had been absent from the exhibition highlights in the *Press*’s art page in 1992, and the following year its interesting but hardly significant shows, received intermittent coverage. Ussher’s summary of exhibition highlights in 1993 again largely ignored the CSA, drawing attention to dealer gallery exhibitions of artists, including Bill Hammond, Hotere, Neil Dawson and Max Gimblett. The Society’s programme continued to feature amateur shows. The Mezzanine level of the building was designated a members’ club in March 1993, providing artists with the opportunity to exhibit and work together. Thematic shows were also introduced, including still life, portraiture and flower painting. Such exhibitions only consolidated perceptions about the Society’s limited value to the serious art community. Even though Buxton recognised the need for a drastic change in exhibition policy and employed a number of professional curators under contract who oversaw the presentation of quality exhibitions, most notably *Stimulus To Style* (1994), such efforts could not be consistently maintained. Drummond recalls that *Stimulus To Style* did enhance the CSA’s reputation but ‘it was not going on long enough to make a difference...’

By 1994, it was well known that the Society was seeking to recover financial losses through the sale of its collection. Chance discussions between CSA president Alison Ryde and Brocket drew the Society’s problems to the latter’s attention, raising his concern about the potential loss of important historical works to Canterbury. If they were to be sold, the Christchurch Civic Art Gallery Trust, on which Brocket sat, was ideally suited to negotiate on behalf of the McDougall Gallery. The Trust had been

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128 *Preview*, March 1993, No. 175.
130 John Hurrell, *Stimulus To Style. The Metamorphosis of an Artwork*, Christchurch: CSA Gallery, 1994, and interview, Nigel Buxton, 22 May 2007. Buxton recalls that such shows were intended to bring the art community back to the CSA. He deliberately selected artists such as Riduan Tomkins and Andrew Drummond to participate because of their associations with the School of Arts. ‘I approached all the movers and shakers and that was deliberate. It would provide credibility.’ The response was by no means discouraging, but rarely materialised in tangible exhibitions or even exhibits.
131 Interview, Drummond, 10 May 2007.
132 Interview, Brocket, 10 July 2007.
formed in 1991 as a consequence of Coley’s concern that the City Council might wish to sell works from the public collection. He believed that there was a need for an organisation that could acquire works for the McDougall Gallery independent of the City Council. Brocket recalls:

He wanted a trust formed to create another avenue for acquisitions for the gallery outside the control of the Council. It was born out of paranoia [sic] and was driven by Ian Miles [Friends’ president] and Coley. However, it really only gathered momentum when Hilary Langer as president of the Friends came on and further momentum when Hilary, Malcolm Ott, David Stock, John Coley and myself became involved. The Friends put forward $30,000 as seeding funding for the Trust. The Trust did nothing apart from purchase a Robin White print in those early years. When the negotiations for the CSA’s collection came up, that established the Trust with a sense of purpose.133

In August 1994 Brocket reported to lawyer and Christchurch Civic Art Gallery Trust member, David Stock, that Ott would approach the Trust Bank Canterbury Grant Board to discuss applying for more than $200,000 in funding. In addition, the McDougall Gallery would identify two schedules of important art: those of high historical value to Canterbury and preferred works.134 However, although Coley and Roberts drew up an inventory of significant works, a second list consisted of items that had been gifted or purchased with the City Council’s grant of £50 between 1912 and 1931. The works in Schedule I included Hodgkin’s’s Barn, Picardy, Page’s Lambton Quay, and van der Velden’s Otira Stream, while Schedule II consisted of 24 works, five acquired with the City Council grant, as well as paintings from bequests such as Samuel Butler’s Portrait of John Marshman, Grace Joel’s In Time of Prayer and W. A. Sutton’s Fading Shadows, Lake Wakatipu. Many paintings in this inventory compared favourably in quality with those on Schedule I.135 Less noteworthy, perhaps, were J. M. Madden’s Otira Valley, Margaret Stoddart’s Suffolk

133 Ibid.
134 Brocket to David Stock, 10 August 1994, Christchurch Civic Art Gallery Trust, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Box. No. 25, CAG 31.
135 Christchurch Civic Art Gallery Trust proposal to the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board, Christchurch Civic Art Gallery Trust, Robert McDougall Art Gallery Box No. 25, CAG 31. The Trust’s submission to the New Zealand Grant Board emphasised the collection’s historical significance.
Schedule II also included several paintings that were inappropriate for this category. In particular, McIntyre’s *Self Portrait* (1913) was purchased by the CSA in 1946 from art dealer McGregor Wright in Wellington for 45 guineas. The Society paid 30 guineas and the balance was contributed by CSA members, following a decision it would ‘reduce the purchase price to the Society.’ Roberts maintained that the painting was acquired by subscription, which qualified it for Schedule II. Marks understandably objected to this decision, arguing that it was the sole property of the Society, ‘without element of grant or bequest.’

Why had two distinct categories been established? Negotiations between the CSA and the Trust took place over seventeen months with considerable differences between the two parties, particularly in regards to the value, ownership and Society’s responsibilities towards its collection. Brocket recalls that the Trust was in a strong position. Its legal representative, Stock, was at the height of his career and the CSA was in urgent need of funds to ensure its future. He also notes that Roberts was closely involved with documenting the provenance and valuation of art works for the Trust:

Neil produced the list collection and then identified which paintings were donated. The process may have been slowed by Nigel [Buxton] almost seeing money being taken away from him.... We had to raise the funds and had time to slow the process down when the CSA needed to secure the funds.

In total, 42 identified works were earmarked for purchase, with a market value of approximately $800,000. The Trust adopted a range of strategies to ensure that it could acquire them at the most reasonable price. The allocation of art works into Schedules I and II placed the Trust in a strong position to contend that the CSA’s ownership was accompanied by responsibilities that it needed to acknowledge as part of the negotiation process. Because Schedule II was made up of art works that had

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136 CSA Collection Schedule I and II, Permanent Collection, CSA Filing Cabinet AO18.
137 CSA minutes, 8 October 1946.
138 Simon Marks to David Stock, 26 October 1995, Canterbury Society of Arts Collection, CSA Filing Cabinet, AO 18.
139 Interview, Brocket, 10 July 2007.
been presented to the CSA, it was in turn possible to argue that their ownership was contestable. The Trust also maintained that discussions should proceed on the premise that the purchase was for a collection of work, as opposed to negotiating the sale of individual paintings, prints and sculptures. Acting for the Trust, Stock dominated proceedings. If it was possible to acquire van der Velden’s *Otira Stream*, at the best price, then why not accept less significant Schedule II works such as Daisy Osborn’s *Portrait of the Artist’s Mother* as part of this negotiation process? In addition, because the sale was negotiated directly between the Trust and the CSA, the Trust claimed that it was inappropriate to include a dealer’s or auctioneer’s commission on the sale (which on Coley’s advice the Trust accepted as 30%).^{140} Roberts, who was acting director of the McDougall Gallery following Coley’s resignation in July 1995, presented a revised valuation. Webb’s valuation stood at $829,950 while Roberts’s totalled only $365,300.^{141} Although Stock acknowledged that Roberts was not a disinterested party, he took full advantage of his valuation. The Trust also proposed that Grace Joel’s *In Time of Prayer* and four works purchased with the City Council grant, should be gifted and that conservation previously undertaken on seven of the paintings at the McDougall Gallery had cost $10,427.37, a portion of which should be reduced from the purchase price. Finally, because Webbs’ valuations were perceived to be too high, Stock argued that it was appropriate to reduce these valuations to 90% for the Schedule I works (where ownership was clearly that of the CSA) and by one-half of 90% for Schedule II (where the CSA’s ownership, according to the Trust, was questionable). On this basis the Trust made an offer for the Schedule I works of 90% of $456,400, less 30% commission, totaling $287,532, and an offer for the Schedule II works of 50% of $373,550, less 30% commission, totaling $82,267.^{142} The Trust further reduced its offer by $7,567.37 for conservation, proposing a final purchase price of $362,233

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^{140} Brocket to Stock, 10 August 1994, Box No. 25, CAG 31.
^{141} Roberts to Brocket, 13 June 1995, Box. No. 25, CAG 31. Privately, Roberts further argued that the CSA had an absolute responsibility towards the sale of the works to the McDougall Gallery, stating that it would be possible for the public gallery to claim a recovery fee of $184,800 from the Society for care and storage of the works from 1989 if they were not sold to the Trust.
^{142} *Ibid* and Christopher Taylor Fine Art, 20 March 1995, AO18 Filing Cabinet. A valuation on the art works was also provided by Christopher Taylor, who was now providing independent art valuations as Christopher Taylor Fine Arts. He stated that if the ‘CSA Selling Gallery sold the entire collection and deducted it’s standard commission of 20% plus GST, then the CSA would net a return of $584,195.00 from the sale of the collection.’
Although the CSA agreed with the Trust’s categorisation of works, it dismissed suggestions that its ownership was accompanied by restraints. Buxton maintained that the works were clearly the Society’s property, and that there were few, ‘if any, where the CSA’s ownership can be questioned.’ He also emphasised that the Society had already expressed its generosity when it gifted a large portion of its collection to the city in 1932. Marks maintained that any paintings gifted by members of the public after 1932 could have equally been offered to the McDougall Gallery. He also singled out the Mcintyre Self Portrait as the property of the CSA, and drew attention to the generous access that the Society had given to the McDougall Gallery in its use of the collection for exhibition over previous decades. He responded to the Civic Trust’s proposal with a counter request of $528,113.

The Civic Trust replied that the CSA must acknowledge its responsibility to those who had subscribed to or gifted works. In September 1995, Stock told Marks how the City Council’s annual grant of £50 from 1911 to 1931 had been given to the CSA in response to its request for financial assistance. A number of these works were still retained by the Society and Stock questioned the integrity of the selection process in 1932 in which works from the CSA’s collection were gifted to the McDougall Gallery, with the City Council required to accept the CSA’s judgment. Furthermore, works held at the McDougall over previous decades had been accepted on the understanding that they would remain in a public collection and not be sold at a later date on the open market. If the CSA pursued such an avenue, the McDougall Gallery would be entitled to compensation for storage and conservation. Roberts presented the Society with examples of art works of comparable dimensions and media by artists who were represented in the CSA’s collection that the Civic Trust was seeking

143 If the five works identified as not being the property of the CSA are added to the value of works to be sold, the total value of the 42 works up for negotiation is $884,950.
144 Simon Marks, ‘CSA Collection,’ Meeting of the Christchurch Civic Art Gallery Trustees, 9 June 1995, Box No. 25, CAG 31.
145 Ibid.
146 Marks to Stock, 3 August 1995, CSA Filing Cabinet, A018.
147 Ibid.
to purchase. These works had been sold recently at auction at much lower values than those documented by Webbs in its valuation of the Society’s collection. For example, a Mcintyre painting *Edinburgh Street Scene* had sold for $13,000 on 27 June 1995\(^{149}\) which stood in contrast to Webbs valuation of Mcintyre’s *Self Portrait* at $90,000. Stock also pointed out that conservation yet to be undertaken by the McDougall Gallery on the 42 works totaled an additional $45,000. He concluded that that the Trust’s offer remained at $362,233.\(^{150}\)

Marks replied by drawing attention to the legality of the Society’s ownership and maintained that the inclusion of conservation costs in the negotiation process was inappropriate due to the reciprocal nature of the long-standing agreement with the McDougall. However, he added that in view of a desire to achieve a ‘prompt resolution,’ the CSA would settle for a purchase price of $400,000 plus GST.\(^{151}\) Stock countered that current prices achieved in the market did not warrant a consideration of raising their offer. The CSA should either provide evidence of the market value of the works, or acquire an independent valuation to be mutually agreed upon, or accept $362,233.\(^{152}\) Under some duress, the Society agreed to the Trust’s purchase price on condition that the works be held for future generations and that ‘in any public statement announcing the transfer of the collection, there will be recognition of the part that the CSA has played historically in gathering together the collection.’\(^{153}\)

The purchase of selected works from the CSA by the Trust represented an important shift in the long-standing relationship between the Society and the public gallery. Whereas previously the CSA’s collection had been available to the McDougall on a friendly and informal basis, the negotiation process clarified that this association was now entirely professional. It was informed by the concerns of staff and management in both institutions for the restoration, storage, exhibition, valuation, registration and documentation of art works held in public collections. It represented the demise of the CSA’s admirable, but ultimately amateur, role in developing a major public

\(^{149}\) Recent prices achieved for comparison, Box No. 25, CAG 31.  
\(^{150}\) Stock to Marks, 23 September 1995, Filing Cabinet, AO18.  
\(^{151}\) Marks to Stock, 26 October 1995, CSA Filing Cabinet, AO18.  
\(^{152}\) Stock to Marks, 9 November 1995, CSA Filing Cabinet, AO18.  
\(^{153}\) Marks to Stock, 4 December 1995, CSA Filing Cabinet, AO18.
permanent collection. This clarification of responsibilities between the art society and public gallery was paralleled in the move by the National Art Gallery from its accommodation shared with the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts (NZFA), in Buckle Street in Wellington, into the new purpose-built Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (MONZ) also in 1995. The NZFA and the National Art Gallery had shared the Buckle Street premises since the latter's opening in 1936.\textsuperscript{154} When the public gallery vacated the building, the Academy faced a crisis as its visitor numbers fell.\textsuperscript{155} NZFA president, Philip Markham, informed its membership that if the Academy was to survive, it needed to relocate and that negotiations for assistance from MONZ would not be easy:

The MONZ Board, led by Sir Ronald Trotter, are [sic] a group of business people faced with getting a $280,000,000 project up and running. They are not disposed to helping an organisation that is not prepared to help itself or to recognize that it does not exist in a time warp. [sic] These are not the 1930s. We are on the brink of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century in an era of user pays…. The Academy must recognize this.\textsuperscript{156}

The Academy eventually negotiated a settlement with MONZ, in which it sold its right to occupy space in the Buckle Street gallery for $1.2 million,\textsuperscript{157} and relocated to Queens Wharf off Lambton Quay.\textsuperscript{158}

A similar acknowledgement of professional responsibilities informed negotiations between the Trust and the McDougall Gallery, and the CSA. The agreement to the purchase price of $362,233 was a credit to the legal expertise of Stock and the know-how of Roberts. The latter now admits that 'we were trying to get them as cheaply as possible.'\textsuperscript{159} Buxton recalls that negotiations were challenging:

\textsuperscript{155} Philip Markham, 'President's Report 1996,' \textit{107\textsuperscript{th} Annual Report of the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts Year Ended 31-12-96}, unpaginated.
\textsuperscript{156} Philip Markham, 'Special Meeting of Academy Members December 1996,' \textit{Academy Art News}, No. 37, February 1997, unpaginated.
\textsuperscript{157} Philip Markham, 'President's Report 1997,' \textit{108\textsuperscript{th} Annual Report of the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts Limited—Year Ended 31-12-97}.
\textsuperscript{158} Ted Downing, 'Relocation Update From Council,' \textit{The New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts Artsnews}, No. 42, February 1998, unpaginated.
\textsuperscript{159} Interview, Roberts. 1 June 2007.
Neil was aggressive. He wanted to secure the works for the city.... The McDougall Gallery argued that the grant from the Christchurch City Council had contributed to the purchase of the works.... John was quite aggressive. [He maintained that] the works were already partly owned by the city and the city did not have to pay for them. John did not really care about the CSA.... One of John’s arguments was that we had to start negotiating with [the reduction of a] 30% commission. He would have known that this was incorrect.160

Coley had been a CSA council member almost continuously from 1966 until 1990.161 Equally, Roberts would have been well aware of the importance of the close association between the two institutions and the benefits of access to the Society’s collection over the previous twenty years. Was Buxton correct in his belief that Coley and Roberts were no longer interested in the welfare of the Society? It does seem that they capitalised on its weaknesses, but in their role as representing the public art gallery, they can hardly be blamed for this. Whatever their motives, there is no denying their commitment to the retention of the CSA’s collection in Canterbury, and their appreciation of its historical associations with the region. This was so, whether the future owners would be the public gallery or the existing CSA. Coley believes that negotiations were undertaken in good faith by both parties:

I am not aware of any hard hearted attitude on behalf of any of the trustees I knew. They were looking at an outcome. I thought that reasonable people got together and made a reasonable deal.162

Although Roberts’s valuations were unquestionably modest, there was little to suggest that the majority of the Society’s council initially understood, or were prepared to acknowledge, that its ownership of the collection was accompanied by responsibilities. Indeed, a number of the CSA council maintained that it could do with it as it wished.163 Coley, Roberts and the Trust were right to maintain that

160 Interview, Buxton, 22 May 2007.
161 CSA minutes, 7 November 1963 and Coley to Taylor 13 June 1990, Director’s Correspondence, 1988–1993, Box 57, CAG 1.
162 Interview, Coley, 13 July 2007.
163 Marks to Stock, 3 August 1995, CSA Filing Cabinet, AO 18, and Meeting of the Christchurch
morally the collection must remain in public ownership and to its credit the Society in turn came to recognise that it retained a duty towards the collection’s care. Shortly after negotiations were concluded in December 1995, Marks sent a memorandum to Buxton, detailing his understanding of the acceptance of the price for the collection. He concluded that the sum agreed was justified because:

If we take the aggregate value of $582,900 of Schedules 1 & 2 excluding the [Kathleen] Scott Bronze [gifted to the CSA by the Sportsmen of New Zealand] then we deduct from that figure the following works which were purchased with a CCC grant prior to 1932 and therefore effectively already owned by the City.

a. Grace Joel In Time of Prayer $15,000  
b. A E Kelly Diana $5,000  
c. A F Nicoll Marekee Aix Fruite Bruge [sic] $15,000  
d. Richard Wallwork Up for Repairs $5,000  
e. Frank Wright A Summer Storm $8,000  
Subtotal $48,000.00

This leaves a net value for Schedules 1 & 2 excluding the above 5 paintings and the Scott Bronze of $534,900 including GST. We then discount that aggregate value by 30% for “the private sale of heritage works in one lot to a friendly party”, and the result is a fair value of $374,430 inclusive of GST (or $332,826 excluding GST). Therefore the Trust’s offer on behalf of the City, of $362,233 plus GST, represents fair value and accordingly has been accepted on that basis.164

Although the CSA acknowledged its duty towards the collection’s care in settling with the Trust, it did so very late in the piece, when it faced impending ruin. How come? The Society’s future resided in the sale of historical works from its collection, but it was also this reliance upon its impressive past that had hindered its ability to address the urgent need for change over the previous twenty years. Although Taylor was aware of the need to attend to the amateurism of its exhibition programme and

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164 Memorandum from Marks to Buxton, 6 December 1995, CSA Filing Cabinet, AO18.
upgrade the gallery’s premises, he was also conscious of the value of the Society’s history and the way in which this continued to sustain the CSA. Such an attitude was compounded by its aging, conservative membership which felt alienated from the kinds of changes that Taylor proposed. Although necessary renovations had been carried out, the resources that Coley could bring to the contemporary Art Annex, such as professional curators and the publication of exhibition catalogues, were entirely absent from the Society’s infrastructure, which essentially remained that of a nineteenth century art society. There is little evidence to suggest that Taylor and the council intended to fully address these inadequacies. Rather, they remained—in retrospect—unrealistically confident that the CSA was financially sound and that its future was assured. Unfortunately, this optimism compounded the Society’s problems. The continued growth of dealer galleries in the late 1980s further highlighted the fact that the CSA lacked the perceived professionalism to retain or attract serious New Zealand artists. Ironically, Taylor’s exhibitions’ policy, which was intended to raise standards and increase support for the CSA, often served to alienate long-standing members who transferred their allegiances to the more inclusive ‘art society’ atmosphere of the Friends of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery. Finally, it is no coincidence that the crisis that the Society faced was matched by a similar need for the NZAFA to redefine its role at the same time. Inevitably, changes in how the arts were administered ultimately caught up with both the CSA and the NZAFA. By 1995, neither institution could continue to ignore the environment in which they sought to support the arts and fulfil their objectives. The arts, and their institutions, had irrevocably changed.

Shortly before its decisive negotiations with the Trust, the CSA formed a steering committee to put together a new vision for the Society. It was made up of council members, artists and businesspeople, comprising Brocket, Buxton, Geoff Cone, Gillie Deans, Tony Gardiner, Hudson-Ware, Tom Kain, Marian Maguire, Marks and Don McAra. In December 1995, following the sale of the collection, the committee held more than $400,000 to invest in the restructuring of its organisation. In June 1996, following almost three months in which the Gloucester Street gallery closed to

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165 CSA minutes, 26 April 1995.
undertake extensive renovations, the CSA re-opened as CoCA, (Centre of Contemporary Art). Buxton referred to its former historical collection in the *Press*, but only to contrast this with his intentions to engage with contemporary art:

Its placement as a centre of current arts rather than a repository for an historical collection sends a clear message of how the gallery sees its role in the Christchurch art scene. “We see ourselves as a centre for cultural production, not just an art gallery in the old sense. We’re appealing now to a broad audience.” The centre is not competing with the McDougall Art Gallery or with dealer galleries, but functions as a general centre of arts. “Our vision statement, ‘To be a dynamic and vibrant centre that embraces the diversity of contemporary cultural production,’ sums up how we see our future role.”

However, in spite of Buxton’s apparently sweeping dismissal of its past, CoCA’s objectives were substantially indebted to the CSA’s role and identity over the previous 116 years, particularly the inclusive nature of the Society’s history from the 1960s. Emphasis was placed on representing the diversity of arts practice to attract ‘the widest possible audience for participation in CoCA programmes.” Such objectives shared much in common with the CSA’s ambitions throughout its history.

Moreover, the Society’s past also ensured that it made one further significant contribution to the arts. The negotiation process and the sale of its collection had allowed the Trust to establish associations with individuals and organisations that would prove to be critical to the building of a new public Christchurch art gallery. At the meeting in which payment was made to the CSA, Brocket put forward a proposal that the Trust should manage a fundraising campaign for a new gallery. He suggested that an approach should again be made to Trustbank Community Trust Board, this time to fund up to $5 million towards a new gallery site. He recalls that the response from individuals and the community for funds to purchase the CSA’s collection had been remarkable. It provided a precedent:

167 CoCA,’ Steering Committee File, Canterbury Society of Arts Charitable Trust Trading as CoCA.
I wrote to a group of people. Diana Isaacs, Miles Warren and Bill Sutton, and I received a virtual return from all of them. A cheque arrived from Sutton for $30,000 towards the [CSA’s] collection. This was followed by a meeting with Richard Westlake the manager from Trustbank who organised the first meeting with the Community Trust. The City Council initially agreed to put in $100,000 but later took the funds from a bequest [held by the McDougall Gallery] instead. At the end of negotiations when the cheque was signed for the CSA, the City Council changed. I sent out a memo to the Trust that we should start and bring discussions regarding a new art gallery with the City Council to a head… [the recently appointed director of the McDougall Gallery] Tony [Preston] said he would meet with [Mayor] Vicki Buck. Who would come with him? So, two or three important things came from the CSA purchase. Richard Westlake and the Lottery Board and the City Council all had the importance of the arts brought to their attention. The arts now had a visible profile in the City Council and all these connections established a momentum [to fundraise for a new public gallery]. The CSA collection had built the McDougall and it was an important catalyst for the Trust to seriously advocate for a new gallery.169

The Society’s desire to make ‘adequate provision for man’s moral and religious wants,’ had always been realised through the most appropriate infrastructures, evident in its first gallery in Armagh and Durham streets and the opening of the McDougall Gallery some forty years later. Whether or not Buxton, the CSA council, Coley and Roberts, or the Trust realised it, the sale of the Society’s collection in 1995 nicely fulfilled the wishes of those who had attended the meeting held in St. Michael’s schoolroom back in 1880 to form the CSA. Although previous generations of CSA councils would have undoubtedly been saddened by the Society’s circumstances in the 1990s, they would have also recognised an enduring vision for the arts and its continued realisation in the Trust’s intentions for Canterbury in 1995.

169 Interview, Brocket, 10 July 2007.

Since the late 1950s, survey histories of New Zealand art have usually characterised art societies in this country as conservative institutions, obstructing the development of the arts and the work of young, contemporary artists. Such stereotypes became predominant following the appointment of Peter Tomory as director of the Auckland City Art Gallery in 1956, and reflected both the priority that he gave to the research and publication of New Zealand’s art history, and his hostility towards the Auckland Society of Art.1 Early on, he identified the ‘modern’ era in New Zealand art as beginning in the 1890s with the arrival of Petrus van der Velden, James Nairn and Edward Fristom, describing their presence as ‘professional injections into a largely amateur practice’.2 He maintained that the romantic realism and impressionism of van der Velden and Nairn, challenged ‘strong English tendencies’ in New Zealand art. As art institutions founded in the nineteenth century which appeared to perpetuate the example of the Royal Academy in New Zealand, art societies perfectly represented a convenient reactionary target for Tomory and his agenda as modernising director of the Auckland City Art Gallery. Even when Gordon Brown and Hamish Keith acknowledged the positive contribution that the societies made in the late nineteenth century in An Introduction to New Zealand Painting (1969), they qualified their observations by drawing attention to the supposedly predominant conservatism of these organisations:

Although the art societies have tended to act as an inhibiting force on New Zealand art, this was not strictly the case in the early years of their formation when they did much to promote local art, even if their understanding was often too restricted to offer the fullest encouragement to the more promising younger painters.3

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2 Johnston, p. 29.
Brown’s and Keith’s observations have been reaffirmed by numerous survey publications. In his essay, ‘The High Arts in a Regional Culture-From Englishness to Self-Reliance’ in *Southern Capital Christchurch. Towards a City Biography* (2000), Jonathan Mané-Wheoki observed that the Palette Club, a young ‘rebellious’ group of artists which reacted against the constraints of an ‘outmoded’ CSA council in the 1890s, anticipated the response of the following generation of artists who championed modernism in the 1920s and 1930s:

The conservatism of the art establishment had given rise to the formation in 1889 of the Palette Club.... A generation later, the Group, an informal association of young artists whose liberal attitudes contrasted with the staid, conservative outlook of the CSA, was founded in 1927. During the next fifty years the Group Shows featured work by some of the most progressive artists in New Zealand, who were in touch with more recent developments in modern European art.4

Discussion of the art societies’ contribution to the arts in the twentieth century consists of reiterated accounts of these institutions’ inability to support the development of the country’s art. In *New Zealand Painting 1900-1920: Traditions and Departures* (1972), Brown remarked that the New Zealand Academy of Fine Art’s (NZAFA) decision in 1909 to include greater representation of artists on its hanging committees was ‘a sign that the Art Society’s rigid conservatism was beginning to crack under the mounting pressure from younger, more progressive artists.’5 History is here adopted to suit Brown’s tenuous thesis. Equally debatable are criticisms of society collection policies and a preference for academic British artists at the assumed expense of the development of New Zealand art. In her unpublished research paper, ‘Imperial Art: British Painting in the New Zealand International Exhibition 1906-07,’ Linda Tyler condemned the CSA’s acquisition of £2,442 worth of Royal Academy art works from the exhibition:

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Coming as it did just as an indigenous New Zealand painting was getting to its feet, the British Art Exhibit in the 1906-07 exhibition imbued New Zealand art with a sense of inferiority, and ensured a degree of dependence on British art for the next forty years.⁶

Brown and Keith further claimed that after the First World War, the societies’ failure to embrace change led to their inevitable demise as institutions of relevance to cultural growth:

The position and power of the Art Societies declined after the First World War. Even Christchurch with the strongest and most active society experienced dissension amongst its members, with younger painters often complaining about the arbitrary manner in which works were selected for exhibition, but the whole problem had at its root the struggle of the younger generation against the staid ideas upheld by the older painters.⁷

Brown’s description of this period in New Zealand Painting 1920-1940 is particularly damning, blaming the societies for the cultural ‘wasteland’ that he maintained typified the 1920s and 1930s:

The authority of the art societies within the community in the years immediately after the War was still reasonably well accepted, but although the corporate life that maintained their buoyancy through the decade gave the impression of a craftsman-like veneer, the fact that they were unable to sustain the individual accomplishment of the better painters began increasingly to weaken the internal structure of most of the societies. More and more the gifted painter began to look elsewhere to find an outlet for his art.⁸

Although more tempered, Michael Dunn drew similar conclusions in New Zealand Painting: A Concise History (2004), in his discussion of the introduction of the La

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⁷ Brown and Keith, p. 105.
Trobe Scheme, commenting that ‘Almost unavoidably the art societies and art schools became conservative and by the 1920s it was time for an injection of fresh blood.’

Anne Kirker’s discussion of expatriate painters in Europe in the 1920s in *New Zealand Women Artists* (1986) similarly refers to the limitations of the art societies and their alienation of the more promising artists:

Loss in the 1920s was two-edged: the returning or imported artist had to meet insular ignorance and prejudice from art societies and from a public to whom even the work of the French Impressionists was unfamiliar, and the name of Cézanne unknown.

The establishment of the independent artists’ organisations, The Group and the New Zealand Society of Artists, has also been perceived as evidence of the societies’ inadequacies. Brown described The Group as a collective of radical artists whose exhibitions shocked the CSA’s conservative members:

Frequently those invited [to exhibit with The Group] were artists who had previously upset the decorum of local art societies…. It was largely due to the presence of [Francis] Shurrock and [R. N.] Field that led Dr G. M. Lester to say of the exhibition, when he opened it: ‘They represent a definite attitude towards art, one of revolt and experimentation.’…. With the 1932 Group Christopher Perkins and Rita Angus were amongst the new contributors.… Another critic suggested that ‘possibly there are paintings here that the committee of the Society of Arts would ban from a society exhibition.’

The conclusion that Brown again came to, was that the societies’ influence was waning. He asked: ‘What caused the decline suffered by the art societies from the early nineteen twenties?’ and went on to answer:

The sense of purpose, so evident in the earlier years of the art society movement, evaporated in much the same way as the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts lost its cohesive drive once it had gained the objective after which for

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years it had been striving: the National Art Gallery and its own new headquarters.... as they increasingly failed to comprehend the changing values entering the arts, the gulf widened, and the more reactionary the societies became... In recent years certain art societies have rather belatedly begun to adapt to the changing circumstances while others continue to wallow in the worst sort of amateurism.12

Neil Roberts’s *A Concise History of the Arts in Canterbury 1850-2000* (2000) also reiterated the CSA’s conservatism during this period, noting that ‘the Canterbury Society of Arts, which had been the focus in giving the Christchurch visual arts community some cohesion, remained conservative and slow to accept change.’13

However, the single symbolic episode that has drawn most attention to such assumptions has been the ‘Pleasure Garden Incident.’14 The initial refusal by the CSA to purchase a contemporary work by Frances Hodgkins in 1948 has provided a rationale for subsequent generations of art commentators and historians, from E. H. McCormick to Mané-Wheoki, to emphasise the outdated attitudes and inflexible authority of the CSA. In 1954 McCormick commented:

> [The Pleasure Garden Incident was] perhaps a turning point, in the struggle of New Zealand art to free itself from the bondage of timid prejudice and sterile convention.15

Brown and Keith described the significance of the Hodgkins debate as a milestone in which the art societies’ influence was challenged and successfully diminished:

> New Zealand public galleries, dominated in nearly every centre by the local art society and representing tastes firmly fixed in the less exciting aspects of late nineteenth century art, offered little hope of stimulation and change in public

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13 Roberts, p. 39.
attitudes towards painting. *The Pleasure Garden* affair showed that these bastions could be forced...\(^{16}\)

Mané-Wheoki highlighted the perceived ignorance of the CSA council, and also implied that its actions contributed to Christchurch’s diminishing importance as a centre for the arts from the 1950s:

What the ‘Pleasure Garden incident’ revealed was the depth of the local establishment’s prejudice against modern art and the power of the CSA as an arbiter of standards. Fairburn observed: ‘In Christchurch you have a number of troglodytes controlling public policy in the arts. They are men of no distinction of any kind. They are dull, ignorant and malicious. So long as Chch [sic] (or any section of it) continues to take these people seriously, there will be incidents of this kind.’ ... McCahon left Christchurch in 1953 to live permanently in Auckland. In a sense, the construction of a nationalist art history (from an Auckland perspective, with McCahon as a pivotal figure in modern art) went with him. Henceforth Christchurch would be represented as a provincial, conservative visual arts community.\(^{17}\)

Even the CSA council’s appointment of the avowedly modernist André Brooke as secretary in 1960 is fraught with criticisms of the institution. Rather than emphasise the contribution that he and the Society made to contemporary art during this period, his resignation is highlighted as evidence of the CSA’s ingrained conservatism. In *Concise History*, curator Felicity Milburn noted that Brooke’s directorship was ‘short-lived... and he resigned in 1961.’[sic]\(^{18}\) Surveys of New Zealand art considering the period from the late 1960 to mid-1980s have also tended to ignore the presence and contribution that the CSA continued to make to the arts. However, to their credit, Mané-Wheoki and Milburn both acknowledged the Society’s contribution in the 1960s and 1970s. In *Southern Capital*, Mané-Wheoki observed:

> At the CSA the Group continued to hold annual exhibitions, which included some of the most advanced art in New Zealand. In 1964 John Coley formed the 20/20 Vision group of artists, who drew their avant-garde impetus from

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\(^{16}\) Brown and Keith, p. 165.

\(^{17}\) Mané-Wheoki, p. 316.

\(^{18}\) Felicity Milburn in Roberts, p. 74.
contemporary developments in Europe and America. In 1970 and 1971 the Sculptors’ Group, founded by [Tom] Taylor and Carl Sydow, held exhibitions that reflected a new excitement in the discipline.19

Milburn similarly commented on the contribution of the CSA to contemporary practice, but her praise was expressed in somewhat qualified terms:

The Canterbury Society of Arts assumed a livelier role during the 1960s, with Barbara Brooke succeeding André Brooke as secretary. The CSA’s Durham Street Gallery, the only hireable venue in the City, was a focus for local art activities. It hosted touring, historical and contemporary exhibitions, helping to fill the gap in the dealer network. All the same, its extensive spaces discouraged solo shows and artists continued to combine forces in groups like 20-20 Vision. Christchurch businessman, Stuart [sic] Mair, was the impetus behind the new CSA Gallery in Gloucester Street. Its three-story premises, encompassing six exhibition areas, opened in 1968. Artists could hire these galleries at reasonable rates and the number of solo shows escalated during the 1970s.20

Most recently, Keith’s survey publication and television series, *The Big Picture. A History of New Zealand Art from 1642* (2007), repeated familiar premises about the societies.21 Keith noted that by the late 1950s, ‘the walls were coming down as the grip of amateur art societies on public art galleries, with their entrenched views on what was and what was not art, weakened.’22 Keith’s only concession in his comments on the general demise of the art societies was to note that:

The inevitable clash between generations, and between professional and amateur, spelt the end of New Zealand’s once burgeoning art societies. Most went the way of the dinosaurs; only a few – Canterbury for example – were to evolve into something more relevant.23

19 Mané-Wheoki, p. 317.
20 Milburn in Roberts, pp. 80-81.
22 Keith, p. 240.
23 Keith, p. 252.
Had the CSA and other art societies in New Zealand been fundamentally conservative and incompetent in their ability to support the arts for more than 100 years as Keith and other critics have claimed? Keith, like the majority of historians and commentators, has continued to deliberately downplay the vital contribution that the CSA made to the arts from the late nineteenth century until the early 1980s. In reality, the assertion that the Canterbury Society of Arts was a reactionary institution impeding cultural development could not be more inaccurate. Unfortunately, the idea that art societies are fundamentally conformist is as entrenched in New Zealand’s art history as Giorgio Vasari’s prolonged and pervasive belief is in Europe’s cultural history that the significance of an artist’s work is correctly assessed by its innovation and influence. Over the generations, young radicals and their movements have always pitted themselves against old reactionaries and their ‘academies’ or in this case, art societies. A further reason for the ongoing repetition of Keith’s, Brown’s, Tyler’s, Roberts’s and Mané-Wheoki’s line of argument is the narrow critical mass of New Zealand’s art history. In a larger society, it would have been challenged long before this thesis. A national trait recently and elegantly exposed by English travel writer Duncan Fallowell in Going as Far as I Can (2008) maintains that New Zealanders are not as intellectually bold as they like to think, and fear to rock the (leaky) boat of orthodoxy. Fallowell’s criticisms of Te Papa’s exhibition policies and the lack of visibility accorded to its European collection, provide an additional context for the disdain expressed by art historians up to now towards art societies.

More than any other art society in the country, the CSA successfully embodied and realised its objectives ‘to promote the study, practice and cultivation of the fine arts.’ Indeed, throughout the 1960s and 1970s it consistently, often radically, exceeded such expectations. Why was it so singular and successful in its vision and endeavours for such a significant period of its history? The CSA’s establishment was comprehensive from the outset. It belonged to a well-realised plan for systematic settlement that encompassed education, religion, science and the arts, and, in a community barely thirty years old, it was part of a precinct of higher learning intended to preserve the ‘blessings’ of civilisation. It could be likened to a miniature version of its English

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counterpart in South Kensington. Unlike other Wakefield settlements, in which public, religious and cultural institutions were founded less methodically, the CSA’s establishment took place following a period of planned long-term economic growth that had ensured that the necessary infrastructure was well in place for institutions of higher learning to thrive. The Society was part of a model Wakefield settlement, and this facilitated its successful advocacy of the fine arts in a new colony. Although in 1863 it was a radical and somewhat overly ambitious idea for Henry John Tancred and his associates to establish an art society, the successful realisation of this vision, seventeen years later, remains equally impressive. It extended the presence of European high culture in an ambitious colonial town and led to a significant and beneficial long-standing relationship between the Society and the Canterbury College School of Art, the latter founded at almost the same time. Of importance to this relationship was the early establishment of practical measures for its success. These included the presence of the School of Art staff on the CSA council, an award system for student works in the Society’s annual exhibitions, the building of the Armagh and Durham Street galleries, the clearing of debt on the gallery’s mortgage, and the regular purchase of local artists’ work from annual exhibitions. In addition, the CSA’s support for Canterbury artists was realised through pragmatic economic management. Within its first ten years, it had amassed almost £1,100 in long-term investment assets, it had developed a collection of 52 art works, costing nearly £1,000, and it had secured a grant of land to build a gallery. Although the CSA would be financially challenged on a number of occasions in its future, the early establishment of a practical infrastructure and its robust economic management certainly facilitated its prolonged existence and success. This is reflected in the promptness with which the CSA built its first gallery for exhibitions, and the care and display of its permanent collection. By clearing the debt on its mortgage by 1902, it was able to focus on the acquisition of works for its collection. Most immediately, this included the allocation of substantial funds towards purchases from the International Exhibition in 1906. While these works were predominantly British, with due respect to Tyler, it is redundant to posit a counterfactual scenario and bemoan the fact that they were not by New Zealanders. Should such an opportunity have been allowed to slip? In retrospect, these purchases were carefully made, they showed cultural breadth, and at the same time, prudent financial housekeeping. By necessity, the Society maintained a realistic approach to its finances and the upkeep of its
collection and gallery. The leasing of the Durham and Armagh Street galleries from 1894 onwards was largely considered an unwelcome but essential means to secure revenue for its activities. Criticisms by CSA council members of the danger that this posed to the permanent collection reveal the extent to which the Society was frequently tested in realising its support for the arts. Notwithstanding the annual purchase grant of £50 that it received from civic offices from 1911 to 1931, the Society must have also been exasperated by the City Council’s consistently limited support of and interest in the arts. Even though the CSA was ultimately pleased to place its permanent collection into the secure care of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery in 1932, it had been nearly twenty years since the idea of a public gallery in Christchurch was first proposed by CSA council member Samuel Hurst Seager.

The presence of the McDougall Art Gallery and the gifting and placement of 125 works from the Society’s collection into the public gallery were further testimony to its success in nurturing cultural development. Although its collection of English art was later subjected to extensive criticism, the original educational responsibilities that it represented now seem neither reactionary nor misguided. Certainly, its acquisition reflects the wider ideals underpinning Christchurch’s educational precinct. Moreover, the significance of the purchase of paintings by admired Royal Academy painters, and the way in which these works contributed to the development of New Zealand art, should not be dismissed by a narrow breed of nationalism. In the first instance, it gave the CSA confidence to be a proud and confident advocate for the arts. The stature of British art works purchased from the International Exhibition in 1906 created an unprecedented interest in the activities of the CSA, (unacknowledged by Brown and others), raising its membership and sales of local works from its annual exhibitions, and causing the Press to praise the Society for its commitment to the arts. This public endorsement increased awareness of the work of local artists and, in turn, encouraged the CSA to place greater pressure on the City Council for financial support. In 1911 the City Council’s decision to contribute £50 annually to the acquisition of work by locally-based artists meant that the Society could at least make a modest provision for the development of a significant collection of New Zealand art.

The opening of the McDougall Gallery coincided with the consolidation of the CSA’s reputation as the leading art society in New Zealand. In spite of the Depression, the
Society’s membership during the 1930s increased and the arts in Canterbury flourished. With Cecil Kelly, Archibald Nicoll and Richard Wallwork all serving on the CSA council, teaching at the School of Art, and being part of the advisory committee for acquisitions for the McDougall Gallery, the Society’s hegemony was now complete. Even the establishment of new arts organisations such as The Group (1927) and the New Zealand Society of Artists (NZSA, 1934), did little to compromise the CSA’s influence. Indeed, both were endorsed by the CSA council with president G. M. L. Lester praising the latter at its 1934 exhibition and The Group at the opening of its 1935 exhibition. Although the NZSA proved short-lived, The Group did not disband until 1977 and its commitment to its annual exhibitions in the Society’s gallery confirms the close and enduring association between the two institutions, the one supposedly radical and the other reactionary. The presence of alternative opportunities for artists to exhibit during the 1930s reveals not so much a reaction against the CSA, but evidence of the vital state of the arts in Canterbury. This was, in part, the outcome of the work of Society councils over previous generations.

Equally impressive was the CSA’s ability to successfully sustain its exhibitions year after year. Frequently the City Council not only failed to assist the Society in its endeavours, but even on occasions appeared to hinder its intentions. This was most evident in the late 1920s when, in an apparently puritanical fit, it cancelled the Society’s dance licence, thereby terminating a vital source of income. Equally damaging, though perhaps less vindictive, was the City Council’s failure to provide an appropriate annual budget for the development of the McDougall Gallery collection. The indifference and even hostility that such inaction implied, were widely revealed on frequent occasions. For example: In the early 1950s during the debate over the gifting of Frances Hodgkins’s The Pleasure Garden; in 1961 during discussions over the presentation of Colin McCahon’s Painting to the McDougall Gallery; and in other instances in the early 1960s when debate over contemporary art works proposed for the collection of the public gallery took place. Comments made by City Councillors regularly exposed their limited understanding and indeed antipathy towards the arts.

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25 Both The Group and the NZSA utilised the Society’s gallery for their annual exhibitions and a number of serious artists exhibited with all three arts organisations. See also Brown, New Zealand Painting 1920-1940pp. 10-11.
If anything, however, the City Council’s failure to adequately provide for the arts only served to strengthen the CSA’s growing influence. The opening of its new, purpose-built and architecturally fashionable art gallery at 66 Gloucester Street in 1968 represented a very tangible expression of the encouragement that the Society received from the arts community. Although largely ignored by art historians and critics, the period from the early 1960s to the late-1970s was arguably the most vital time in its history. In retrospect, it seems hardly surprising that its new gallery simultaneously assumed the duties of a public and dealer gallery, and an art society. In contrast to William Baverstock’s proneness to petulance as the director of the McDougall Gallery and the City Council’s indifference to the arts, the CSA was widely acknowledged and respected as an organisation that nurtured cultural development in Canterbury and New Zealand. Although the ‘Pleasure Garden Incident’ appeared to challenge the CSA’s authority, the wider importance of the controversy resided in the way that debate gave rise to a more mature and serious consideration of modern art in New Zealand. The ultimate support for the acquisition of Hodgkins’s painting reveals that the CSA council and its working members did indeed recognise that modernism had a relevance to the country’s art. This enthusiasm for the modern movement was further evident in the Society’s later commitment to the touring exhibition of Henry Moore’s sculptures in 1956, and the appointment of André Brooke as secretary in 1960. For the next twenty-five years, the CSA advocated, and sometimes led, an emerging contemporary New Zealand art. Its support for a local modern movement was evident in the inaugural Hay’s Art Competition in 1960 and the controversy that followed over the presentation of McCahon’s Painting to the McDougall Gallery. It was also sustained through touring exhibitions such as the Benson and Hedges Award, and numerous solo and group exhibitions by leading New Zealand artists in the 1970s. From 1975 to the early 1980s this included performance, conceptual and feminist art. The presence of such exhibitions in the CSA’s schedule is in marked contrast to the absence of support for post-object art in the majority of public galleries throughout the country. What seems remarkable is how this has been ignored up to now.

26 Feeney, p. 110.
28 Milburn in Roberts, p. 76.
The development of contemporary New Zealand art from the early 1970s was also accompanied by the establishment of a greater level of arts professionalism. The way that the CSA addressed such changes was to influence its future stature. The subjectivity of modernist aesthetics and the demands that this placed on artists and their audiences often required a more specialist consideration of the arts than was previously available. Although the spacious Gloucester Street gallery was able to nurture all aspects of the arts, the more elitist nature of modernism ultimately conflicted with the popular interests of the Society’s amateur working members. In 1968, when the Gloucester Street gallery opened, the CSA rightly perceived that it was on the ‘threshold of exciting developments,’ regarding its new gallery as an important cultural and tourist amenity for Christchurch. Its vision to expand and, as a later generation would put it, ‘grow’ the arts in Canterbury, was essentially inclusive, even democratic. Its new facility aimed to encompass not only contemporary painting and sculpture, but also pottery, folk music, weaving and poetry reading. No doubt these intentions were in part practical, and aimed to increase revenue through growing membership to finance an expanding schedule, but by the late 1970s, this liberalism was entirely at odds with the fundamentally elitist nature of arts professionalism.29 Even though the Society still wished to promote the best in contemporary arts practice, it was not possible to do so in an environment that also included the work of enthusiastic amateurs and hobbyists. Furthermore, the Society’s building and its busy exhibition programme could not be maintained to meet the demands of professionalism without annual funding from central or local government. Unfortunately, this took place just as the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, swayed by Hamish Keith, John McCormack, and others, began to aggressively undermine the role of the art society and its relevance as an institution to the development of the arts in New Zealand.

29 Athol McCredie, Going Public. New Zealand Art Museums in the 1970s, Massey University 1999 (revised 2006), pp. 227–228. McCredie claims that the appointment of directors such as Luit Bieringa to the Manawatu Art Gallery in 1977 represented ‘a shift from the rule of the amateur to that of the professional. Art societies, honorary curators and other volunteers, custodians, and committees or boards of control all gave up, willingly or not, their control over the country’s art galleries to professional staff.’ While I do not disagree, McCredie’s thesis is insufficiently cognisant of the CSA’s unique identity and progressiveness.
The Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council repeatedly failed to recognise that the CSA was making a vital contribution to precisely the kind of serious arts practices that it supposedly advocated. Equally, it had no evident understanding that the Society had been maintaining its activities throughout its history with only meagre resources. It was a credit to the CSA that it sustained support for the arts from the 1930s to 1950s when it was encumbered by recurring debt, and that by the late 1960s, it was able to fund a new and larger gallery. In part, the Society’s successful economic management from the 1950s was due to the frugality and hard work of individuals such as Baverstock, Russell Laidlaw and Nola Barron. Although the gallery’s programme was ‘a shoe-string operation,’ and increasingly subject to criticism, even in the 1970s the CSA functioned as a major player in the arts. This is even more remarkable when we consider its assets, which remained those of a nineteenth-century art society, reliant upon its amateur council members, supporters and volunteers to ensure its success. But it was ultimately ill-suited and unprepared for changes - such as were happening in the public sector - that required the appointment of curators, art historians, exhibition officers and registrars to ensure its future. To that extent, Keith’s picture of the art society as Victorian is correct. At best, the Society’s council in 1975 could only respond with the appointment of its first director.

However, the CSA must also accept some responsibility for its decline. The Society never seriously questioned the possibility that its authority could be undermined, despite significant warnings that it needed to reconsider its structure and role. When the Gloucester Street gallery opened in 1968, CSA council member John Coley pointed out that the institution needed a director to ensure it maintain professional standards. This did not take place until seven years later, and, when it did, Annella MacDougall’s appointment represented an inadequate response to its needs for a more rigorous programme. Although president Miles Warren commented that the opening of the Brooke Gifford Gallery in 1975 meant that the CSA needed to lift its game, there is little to suggest that his proposal met with a serious response. The damning criticisms levelled at the exhibition Land 76 by Rodney Wilson and Peter Bromhead highlighted curatorial limitations in the selection of works, as well as inadequacies in display. In 1978 and 1979, Barron’s suggestions that the Society should reconsider its role and become a government-funded contemporary art space met with a subdued response from the Society’s council. Although Ted Bracey, Tom Taylor and other
staff from the School of Arts aggressively promoted their own political arts agendas, their criticisms of the CSA’s failure to address professional standards and their accompanying support for specialist arts institutions such as the Gingko Gallery was a further wake-up call that the Society chose to ignore. This failure to acknowledge the limitations of its resources was again highlighted in a hard-hitting 1984 review by Wellington marketing consultant Glen Wiggs, which stressed the need for the CSA to raise standards and adopt a greater degree of specialisation.30 Throughout this period, and beyond into the early 1990s, new dealer galleries and exhibition spaces continued to open. By this time, the frequent CSA exhibitions achieved little more than generate the necessary revenue for it to remain open. Christopher Taylor rightly claimed that the Society was stuck in a time-warp and that ‘it always came back that no one was prepared to do anything about it. Big issues only got dealt with when they had to.’31

Having lost numerous artists to dealer galleries and being unable to provide the necessary curatorial rigour for a vital exhibition programme, the somewhat ignominious de-accession of the CSA collection in 1995 represented the demise of its single remaining significant responsibility. Preceded by the failure of the revived arts ball, which further highlighted how entrenched the institution was in its history, a survey of its membership revealed that it was dependent upon an elderly membership that was largely uninterested in current arts practice.32 The de-accession of the CSA’s collection marked an unfortunate but ultimately necessary end to this longstanding and valued institution. Members, and supporters of the local art community, not only failed to adequately rally to its support when it was most needed, but however unwittingly, seemed to hasten its demise. Any desire to guarantee its future yielded to the wider recognition that a professionalism focussed on the specialist needs of arts practices was more important than the CSA’s essentially regional and inclusive focus.

Criticisms of the Society in the 1990s only appeared to confirm or favour the prejudices of many art professionals and consolidate the misleading thesis that such

30 CSA minutes, 8 March 1984.
31 Interview, Christopher Taylor, 22 June 2007.
institutions made a limited and often damaging contribution to the development of the arts in New Zealand. As has been argued however, the CSA was not the conservative and reactionary institution that modernist critics and commentators have made it out to be. It must be remembered that it built its first gallery in 1890 at a time of economic depression and the virtue of the building for the arts was immediately recognised by the *Lyttelton Times* reviewer who noted that ‘the benefits of a better lighted, more substantial and yet cosy gallery has never been enjoyed by New Zealand artists and their patrons.’\(^{33}\) Moreover, the Society developed an art collection that was intended from the outset for the long-term cultural betterment of Christchurch. When Samuel Butler’s portrait of Thomas Cass was presented to the CSA in 1892, it was added to a collection that was clearly understood to ‘constitute the nucleus of what will one day become a collection of great value...’\(^{34}\) When most of it was gifted to Christchurch in 1932, following almost twenty years of pressure by the CSA on the City Council for a public art gallery in which to display it, the *Christchurch Times* acknowledged that ‘thanks to the efforts of the Canterbury Society of Arts, and private individuals, there is a collection of artistic gems in Christchurch of which any city or province might well be proud.’\(^{35}\) In addition to supporting generations of artists who established Canterbury’s reputation as the leading centre for painting in New Zealand in the 1920s and 1930s, the CSA also acted as one of the country’s principal advocate for modernism from the late 1950s to the early 1980s. Frequently, the CSA’s exhibitions anticipated important developments in the country’s art. The 1957 Young New Zealand Artists’ Exhibition was greeted by the *Press* critic as revealing ‘several trends which are reflections of an outlook, almost a professional outlook - hitherto absent from New Zealand painting.’\(^{36}\) Indeed, in 1963 CSA president Stewart Mair appeared highly conscious of the important role the Society occupied in the arts when he first proposed to its membership the need to build a new gallery to house its expanding activities:

> We need to move forward. To stay still is not merely to stay still, it is to slip backwards. The world is changing all the time and we need a new approach...

The pioneers of Canterbury founded this Society in difficult times, we are still

\(^{33}\) *Lyttelton Times*, 11 November 1890, p. 3.

\(^{34}\) *Lyttelton Times*, 9 April 1892, p. 5.

\(^{35}\) *Christchurch Times*, 16 June 1932, p. 3.

pioneers in the 1963 sense, and have great responsibilities and great opportunities.37

Mair's aspirations were fulfilled in exhibitions such as the 1974 Commonwealth Games survey of New Zealand art, described in the Listener by Barbara Brooke as a 'significant survey-almost a “Who’s Who” of art and craft in this country,' and were also evident in John Coley's enthusiasm in 1981 for the installation and performance art of sculptor Graham Snowden's 'Skulls.' In the midst of the Christchurch punk movement, Snowden's light show and projections assaulted the gallery visitor with an inescapable 'solid wallop.'38 All these, and many other milestones in the CSA's history, from Henry Moore to Allie Eagle to Austen Deans to Andrew Drummond, reveal an important contribution to cultural development than is quite different from that forever repeated and disparaged by commentators and historians. The history of the CSA reveals that it deserves to be more carefully considered than simply through the lens of an often narrow and dogmatic modernist agenda. It merits wider acknowledgement as a vital arts and educational institution, progressive in its support for the arts, forever on the 'threshold of exciting developments,' making an essential, and until now hugely underrated, contribution to New Zealand's cultural history.

37 CSA minutes, 26 November 1963.