

[Detail of Kawaupaku, Te Henga, 1967, Don Binney, University of Auckland Art Collection]

Korero with Don Binney

A recent honoured guest at our Chrysalis Seed Art and Faith Resource Centre was the renowned New Zealand painter Don Binney. Born in 1940 in Auckland, Binney studied art at Elam School of Fine Arts from 1958-61 and subsequently was a member of the teaching staff at Elam for 24 years before retiring as Head of Painting in 1998. On 8 November 2001 the following phone interview was conducted with Binney; it appears here in an abbreviated form.

Bridget Underhill: What were the early influences on your art?

Don Binney: Growing up in this country as a child with an uncle at the war and a mother in the US undergoing radical surgery was very much a war baby experience with a family sharing in times of domestic and international crisis. Growing up, my babyhood was in Parnell and early childhood also at Browns Bay, which has been the source of some recent work. When I was still a young kid at Browns Bay I would look out at strange islands floating on the horizon above which the sun rose - there was a certain mystique that I still return to as a 60 year old man. Later my parents and I went to live at Kohimarama near to where Selwyn College is now. Then it was largely farmland and I used to be able to walk from my house to watch the milking every night. By the time I went to primary school I was an amateur bird watcher and I would go to St Heliers Bay and Tahuna-Torea, a short bike ride away, and watch birds there. I remember seeing my first shining cuckoo in Purewa Bush near the Purewa Stream, which was first painted by Albin Martin.

My schooling was of Anglican practice with exposure to a wonderful ornithologist at Kings College, R. B. Sibson, who along with being the classics master would take boys on many bird watching excursions. The Kings College former principal, H.B. Lusk, a dedicated botanist, introduced me to the Kauri logging trails behind Lake Wainamu and Te Henga and to local legends and botany. I learnt a lot of things at that time which I have drawn on ever since as part of my schooling - botany, eco-geography and bird life. This is why I draw a lot from bird and specific land form imagery. These are the informing ideas I have lived with since that time. It is what is part of my code,

reference and acquired language. It is the imagery that has informed my growth and development.

Lusk taught me to use binoculars and their use has had an effect on how I have devised my paintings. Through binoculars you see the bird larger and only momentarily. You catch those defining shapes - the visual stigmas that identify a tui or pipiwharauroa. It is enhanced by scale and a certain brevity with detail commensurate with the enlargement - there are only vital seconds when scanning with binoculars. The land, on the other hand, you can dwell on. This was more than just a question of developing a personal guileless visual vocabulary - it was my way of becoming an inhabitant of the habitat.

After Sibson and Lusk had passed on their insights, I got to know Ru Forgie at Te Henga - she was of the small iwi identifying with Anawata. Ru asked me over for coffee and gave me her own handwritten notes of all the Maori place-names along the West Coast of the Waitakaries. This was an entrusting from one who was tangata whenua and she accepted my engagement with these places. I was also party to handwritten memoirs and I started to learn the tapu places which I will not tell anyone. I'm talking about natural spirituality - these are indigenous spiritualities - those places where the birds come to and go to, the old bullock tracks which are becoming overgrown. This was the encoded natural spirituality of a land from boyhood to an adult man which I was fortunate enough to grow into.

That takes me to the age of 25 or so, and after that I started to travel. I went to Mexico and Central America because I wanted to spend time dreaming and assessing animal and bird imagery in pre-Columbian art and to see how a tricultural community like Mexico could communicate to someone like myself - and it did. I was in Mexico and Central America during 1967-8 on a very generous travel grant and I ended up having an exhibition in Mexico City which became part of the cultural programme of the 19th Olympiad. Then back to a period of great mobility within New Zealand - 2 shows in Auckland in 1969 and then off to Wellington and Christchurch in 1970 where I, with Hotere and Smither, were guest exhibitors with

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seven plus



chrysalis seed trust

Who are Seven Plus?

We are a network of visual artists in Canterbury who meet to encourage each other in our art and faith. Most of us are established working artists, local to Canterbury. We represent various aspects of the art world: some are professional contemporary artists who exhibit locally, nationally and internationally; others work in commercial art and design, or teach. Others are currently studying art at local tertiary institutions. Included in our ranks are a network of art lovers who have a commitment to the vision of Seven Plus.

Seven Plus is one of the art networks under the umbrella of the Chrysalis Seed Trust which is a charitable trust under the auspices of Spreydon Baptist Community Services.

The mission of Chrysalis Seed Trust is to help resource the arts community from a Christian perspective.

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Kia ora!

We have had a busy round of activities since our last newsletter. Christopher and Jilly Marshall gave a wonderful tour of their Bridgewater art collection in September. A group of Christian professionals working in the visual arts met together in early October for lunch and networking. On 26 October we invited Peter Biggs, Chair of Creative New Zealand, to speak to a group of prospective friends and supporters of Chrysalis Seed.

Biggs noted that there are some 10,000 professional artists working in New Zealand. I'm certainly amazed at the ever-widening circle of wonderful people working in arts that we meet each week. We're very excited to have Don Binney as our guest speaker at our next Seven Plus meeting on 24 November at S. Michael's Parish lounge - hope to see you there.

God bless and arohanui! From Bridget Underhill



'Totara graveyard' by Stefan Roberts

Launch of Chrysalis Seed Friends

The Chrysalis Seed Trust is proud to announce the launch of **Friends of Chrysalis Seed** which will enable our supporters to become more closely involved with our work. From the beginning of Chrysalis Seed our key purpose has been to support and resource artists and the arts community as a whole. Our work with visual artists and poets is ongoing and now we are expanding to other forms of artistic expression such as theatre, dance and music, amongst others. This means an increasing number of events where our arts community can showcase their work and a need to expand our current news publication to incorporate all the arts disciplines. As we enter this new phase in the life of the Trust we more than ever need the financial and practical assistance of our supporters.

By joining the "Friends" group you will enjoy benefits such as personal invitations to six Chrysalis Seed arts events a year, library borrowing privileges, annual subscriptions to our publications and more, depending on the amount of your contribution. Extra benefits include annual supporters party invitations, ticket discounts, artist studio visits and advertising privileges. Your donation of more than \$5.00 to the Trust is tax-deductible.

This issue of Seven Plus News and the following issue will be the last in the present format. Subsequent issues will be reformatted to include information and news on a wider range of arts issues and activities and will only be available to any who have joined "Friends of Chrysalis Seed". However, a brief update on our Chrysalis Seed news will continue to be sent out to everyone on our mailing list on a bi-monthly basis.

If you have an interest in advertising your business or services in the new expanded publication, please contact us; we will be glad to discuss your requirements. Enclosed with this edition of Seven Plus News is further information on Chrysalis Seed and the "Friends of Chrysalis Seed". Please contact us if you have any questions. We look forward to partnering with you in this exciting work!

Don Binney Workshop

- Jo O'Hara

It was a full house that met at the CSN Conference/Retreat Centre late in the afternoon of Friday 21 September. Painter Don Binney led a hands-on artists' workshop for fourteen people of all ages and from enthusiastic novices to

enthusiastic established painters looking for spiritual, emotional and artistic enrichment from the quiet enclosed garden and Don's insightful and positive direction. A timetable was suggested of worship, silence, group discussion as well as art work, but everyone was free to take and choose. The consensus was it was an enriching time and a time to be savoured and remembered.

Tour of the Bridgewater art collection (29 September 2001)

- Mike Palmers

What impressed me about this collection was the range of styles represented. Christopher Marshall said he selected art that reflected the

human condition - this showed that life can be tough and a struggle - so it wasn't necessarily nice, comfortable art especially in what he referred to as 'the room of horrors'. I thought his focus on the British traditions of the 20th century was interesting, but the works that grabbed me were the African tribal art and also the series of prints of trees by Denise Copland.

The outdoor sculpture was one of the better integrations between garden space and sculpture that I have seen domestically within New Zealand. I particularly enjoyed the whimsical sculptural pieces under the large oak tree. The realm under the tree became a mystical land. The garden becomes a journey of discovery because most of the sculptures related well to the space they were in.

Chrysalis Seed news

Darryn George is currently part of the highly successful 'Techno Maori: Maori Art in the Digital Age' which is held in partnership between City Gallery Wellington and Pataka Porirua Museum of Arts and Cultures. The show runs from 29 September - 2 December 2001.

Stefan Roberts recently had a solo show 'Nightscapes' at Dobson Bashford Gallery showing from 3-26 October.

Mark Lander had a successful teaching stint in Australia recently where he taught paper making and large-scale printmaking at the Fibre Forum at Geelong. He is currently working on commissioned works for the new site of the Bible College of New Zealand in Condell Avenue.

Katie Thomas and **Anne Fountain** exhibited in 'Sheep' - a group show at CoCA running from 31 October - 17 November.

Jo O'Hara and **Alan McLean** were part of 'Sculpture in the Garden' at Lombardy, Governors Bay, from 9-11 November. This outdoor exhibition of 40 leading and emerging sculptors showing some 143 sculptures represented the largest exhibition of outdoor sculpture ever assembled in the South Island. Proceeds of the exhibition went to Cholmondeley Children's Home and School.

'God and Stephen Hawking' by Robin Hawdon, - a **Re Act Theatre** Production directed by **Lesley McMillan** at the Elmwood Auditorium in Aikmans Road, November 8-10, 13-14 at 8pm, and a 2.30pm performance on November 13.

Seven Plus sculpture show at CoCA from 12 December - 6 January with **Kim Peters**, **Verdun Cochrane**, **Tim Brown**, **Ben Lander**, **Rob d'Auvergne** and **Josh Robbins**.

Art and literary competitions, awards and opportunities

Art Waikato National Art Award

Painting & Printmaking. Theme: 'Our Land' \$10,000. Closing date for entries: 9 January 2002. Entry forms and enquiries: Ph: 07 839 3857 Fax: 07 839 3869 Email: wsa@wave.co.nz

Pollock-Krasner Foundation - New York

Categories: grants are given to artists on the basis of artistic merit and financial need. Open to visual artists who are painters, sculptors and printmakers. Contact: Pollock-Krasner Foundation, 863 Park Ave, New York, New York, 10021, USA www.pkf.org

The Slak Guest Studio ("Stichting Atelierbeheer Slak") is available for visual artists from abroad and is located in Arnhem, The Netherlands. The guest studio may be rented for a minimum period of one month to a maximum period of six months. Contact Stichting Atelierbeheer Slak, t.a.v. Ruth Keteldijk, Koningstraat12, 6811 DE Arnhem, The Netherlands, <http://www.slak.nl>, Email guest.studio@slak.nl

Open Space: UK opportunities for visual artists from overseas.

Directory available from Visiting Arts, 11 Portland Place, London W1N 4EJ, UK. Ph: 00 44 20 7389 3019. Fax: 00 44 20 7389 3016. www.britcoun.org/visitingarts/ Email: office@visitingarts.demon.co.uk

Ideas wanted for a proposed Scottish Pioneer Memorial.

The Canterbury Scottish Heritage Council invites you to submit your ideas about the location and design of a suitable memorial to be erected in a prominent city location to commemorate the contribution to the city of Christchurch by early Scottish settlers.

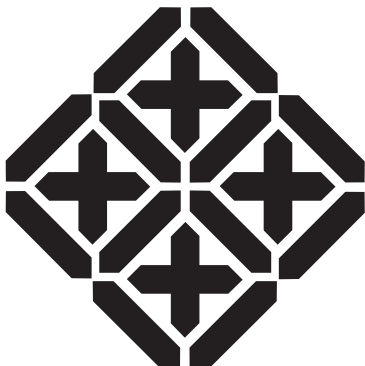
Please forward your ideas in writing to the Secretary of the Memorial Committee: Mrs M. Rynish, 2 Wedgewood Avenue, Christchurch. The Memorial needs to be sizeable - possible three metres high in stone.

Landfall essay competition

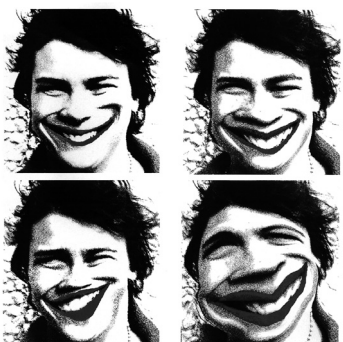
Entries will be accepted until December 21, 2001. For entry forms call 03 479 8807 or email university.press@otago.ac.nz

2002 International Poetry Competition

Closing date is March 15, 2002. Enquiries: email tonychad@clear.net.nz or send a stamped addressed envelope to Competition Secretary, PO Box 48-002, Silverstream, Upper Hutt, or check out the website <http://communities.msn.com/NewZealandPoetrySociety>



'Techno Maori: Maori Art in the Digital Age'
A partnership exhibition between City Gallery Wellington and Pataka Porirua Museum.



Circophany

Alexandra Sim was one of the performers at the recent Circo Arts 'Circophany' in Christchurch.

Korero with Don Binney ...continued from front page

the Christchurch Group, my second time with the group (first in 1964). In 1970 I spent a lot of time in Christchurch - my McDougall painting, 'Canterbury Garden Bird', I did at that time. Then in 1971 I was guest artist at the Victoria University Students Association and tutor in residence with Victoria's Adult Education Department which was my first taste of university teaching.

In 1972 - 1973 I was living in London and then travelled slowly back to New Zealand through Africa and Australia visiting Ethiopia where I saw the wonderful Coptic monasteries, then on through Kenya and Tanzania with its birds and wildlife. I binged on flamingos and fish eagles and all species of vulture and I did drawings which were exhibited in 1974 in Auckland. Soon after my return I gave my first tutorial - a relieving tutorial job in the latter part of 1974. From the age of 34 to 58 I was appended to the Elam School of Fine Arts. I gave a lot to teaching and nurturing which did have a slow steady arresting affect on energies that drove my big painting output. For much of my time I was immersed in rich cultural exchange - I learnt a lot from my students and as they (hopefully) did from me - you lose a bit and you gain a bit.

From the age of 23 to 35 I had a seamless ascent into young to mid career of art practice, and did as many do - opt for some sort of teaching role. It was in those years in the transition from spring time of life to middle that I suddenly realised I was teaching students whose parents I had been at school with - a coming of age.

When I was confronted with African spirituality my old beliefs re-emerged. As a cradle Anglican, from an early life of dragging the anchor and with a lifestyle of disregard for formal observances, I made my first full communion after many years in Nairobi Cathedral. I found my way back through strange routes. I found learnt boyhood spiritual insights suddenly started to freshen and renew in foreign spaces and with the contact with other people of the world. Later, towards the end of the same decade of teaching at Elam, I

found my way into the Julian of Norwich group active under the university chaplaincy. From the late '70s to '80s I was involved with very gentle, non-dogmatic but deeply held belief of the general imprimatur of Julian of Norwich - who has been deeply influential ever since.

It was very important for someone like myself, a wanderer and a battler who spins a lot of verbal energy teaching and creating, the type of approach towards shared spirituality: extreme quiet, shared but gentle access to the awakening of the Spirit and shared silence. For some the coming of the Spirit is a highly energising outward and upward kind of thing, but like art, life and other principal acts of creative existence, different people are served by different shared or ritualised procedures. It has engendered the resource of stability - not just drawn like a desperate well of loneliness but the well of commonality.

Bridget: How has this impacted on your art?

Don: It has kept it going. Very quietly augmented. Spiritually we all kind of shake ourselves loose - our energies giving and taking, losing - knowing our own fatigue levels. I have never evangelized - I have never tried to preach my own belief of art or my own specific views of faith, but I have never disguised them either. People may come to it if they see my signals - I don't sell anything - I don't hide my spirituality as it is, nor do I hock it. More often than not people want to be as they are and are served in terms of exchange. Spiritual recognition of person to person is too precious to be compromised by clinging to a dogmatic absolute of any kind. It is a small thing before a greater format of mutual legibility, love and acceptance. It behoves us not to be hustling our inner gifts - offer freely given, never hawked. In 1991 I finally went to Canterbury Cathedral and I had quite a gentle coming to terms there - at the end of that year I felt held by an interesting fuse of connections after my 50th year. The chips of the mosaic were becoming clearer. One finds oneself facing God through the circumstances and the mentors along the way.

Upcoming events

Next Seven Plus event

7.30pm Saturday 24 November. St. Michael's Parish Lounge. 83 Oxford Terrace - corner of Oxford Tce, Lichfield and Durham Streets - park in school grounds. Artists are invited to bring along recent work or work in progress. Guest speaker Don Binney. Bring a plate for supper.

Chrysalis Seed Book Club at CST Art and Faith Resource Centre. Saturday 8 December 12pm. We are working through the book *Art and Soul* and discussing the issues it raises. In our next meeting Kees Bruin will lead a discussion on underlying theological themes in his 'Musterion' painting. All are welcome.

Public Seminar on copyright for artists.

6pm Monday November 26. The Physics Room, 2nd floor, 209 Tuam St. 'Making it in the visual arts: Practical legal advice on contracts and copyright

for visual artists'. Maggie Gresson (Artists Alliance) and Delia Browne are available for interviews before or after the seminars.

Blue Lady offers a venue for collaboration, experimentation and innovation for artists, and an intelligent, stimulating night out for viewers. Centre Court of Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Friday evenings at 8pm, Robert McDougall Art Gallery. Use night entrance on Rolleston Avenue. Duration approximately 1 hour. \$5 door sales only.

Open performance venue - Liquid Lounge. Meets fortnightly Tuesday evenings 7.30pm onwards. Next meeting Tuesday 20 November. 14 Wise Street, Addington. On the left upstairs. Geared to open-minded, liberal people with an avante-garde bent - any kind of spoken or visual performance.