

Menu of creative work

The Studio Ceramics Dinner Service Show, Recent Auckland Glass, Installation by Charlotte Fisher at Fisher Gallery, Pakuranga, until November 17.

INVITING artists to work with six dinner plates as their starting point makes for very interesting if variable results in an exhibition sponsored by Studio Ceramics New Zealand, the Interior Design Guild and QEII Arts Council.

The most striking and creative work in the exhibition implied a rewriting of the brief. Denis O'Connor's highly inventive wall work *Hand to Mouth* (searching for the Tee Aitch) uses the plates as sculptural elements, laced on to an arched and placed above a carved panel.

Unfettered by design constraints, this work is witty, challenging and a totally unexpected interpretation, about the best reason for inviting artists for such a project. By re-defining the parameters O'Connor avoids the most common pitfall of wrestling with the constraints of the medium and trying to be a designer.

"If design is about 'devising appropriate form' and art is about self-expression then it becomes clear that these artists had a choice of whether to respond to function or to re-invent it.

By placing these objects on a table in place settings, the artist's choice became a response to the function. These were objects on which food could

be placed and then eaten in a social context.

However the table setting could become an artistic statement in itself. *Promise of Pleasure*, Carole Sheppard's setting in rich cobalt blue with gold transfers is a crowded one. The multiplicity of layered components, the well considered relationship between image and form of each plate, bowl, cup and saucer and the highly intellectualised concerns of her work create an integrated statement.

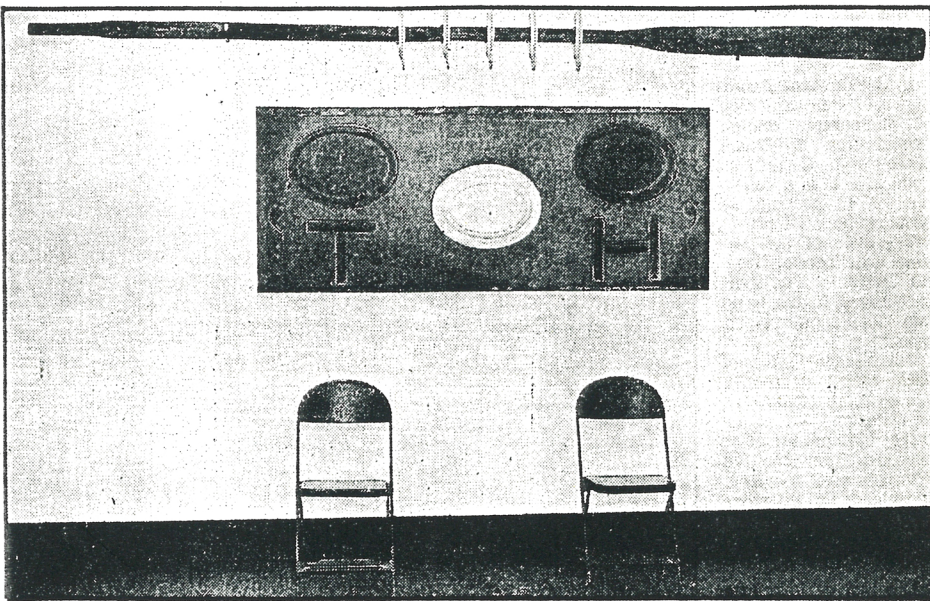
Less resolved but equally interesting Rick Pearson's *A Culinary Model of the Universe* works better conceptually than in terms of composition, execution and detail.

Works on the wall make a different kind of statement. Commemorative wall hung plates, particularly of royalty, are satirised by Denys Watkins in a clever if obscure statement. Conjecture about the meaning of the images aside, these images appear to be made for plates — the designer to the forefront.

Psalm by John Reynolds on the wall alludes to the domestic interior, a psalm represented on the wall and lace doilies on plates. He shatters the illusion with pencil-like "scribbles," the errant child, the rebel in a polite environment.

Fiona Pardington's *Donna Matrix* takes this further in an intriguing mix of sexual fetishes and body parts on bright yellow plates. The accompanying soap dishes suggest these offending images be removed, appropriate to a genteel environment.

There was a better success rate with the wall-hung works, more closely related to the "pictures"



• *Hand to Mouth*... Denis O'Connor at the Fisher Gallery.

Around the Galleries

many of these artists create than with the table settings. But the success and glorious failures make for exciting and challenging viewing.

The glass in the small gallery is quite frankly a disappointment. The display may well have contributed to the dullness. It seems odd that colourless works like Ann Robinson's bowls were allowed to fade away on white pedestals and the heavy museum cases seemed oppressive in the small space.

The works on the whole are competent but unadventurous, "so what" examples of familiar work, especially in the area of hot blown glass. Where were those sparkles of innovation and energy?

The most notable works are tiny cast *Teapot Forms* by Emma Camden, a pair of rope vases by Ruth Milton that show considerable potential and a lively spiked *Sea Anemone Bowl* by Emma Siddell. Move over, established glass blowers, these young practitioners are racing ahead.

The highlight for me at this gallery is undoubtedly a trio of tall sculptures by Charlotte Fisher in the courtyard. Like slender offerings to the elements these three quite separate yet related works draw in the viewer, who is left to wonder, to puzzle and to admire the eloquence of the abstraction, and at the same time be seduced by the inventiveness of the forms.

Ten Years of the Best, at Compendium Gallery, Devonport, until October 2.

THERE is a variable line-up in this exhibition, the eclectic mix epitomising the diverse range of work represented by this gallery, and far too many exhibits. But then that has been a characteristic of this gallery for the past 10 years.

The high standards we expect from ceramic artists John Parker, Marilyn Wiseman and Rick Rudd are there. But look out for the dynamic outstretched teapots of Philip Luxton. They are

even better than his monumentally scaled pots.

There are newer expressions too, like the humorous shiny glazed eels by Steve Fullmer, and Gael Montgomerie's shallow wooden platters with stained rims. Beautifully proportioned and crafted, these bowls are given additional sparkle by treating the rims as a canvas for painterly decoration.

Sally Govorko's palette in her meticulously richly dyed silk garments and scarves is as always beautifully controlled. Toi Maihi's enchanting *Rimu Kapa* (kelp) pouches, Ruth Castle's whimsical small *Mask Form*, Matt McLean's dynamic larger ceramic sculptures, Stephen Myhre's small carved *Waka Onewa* and a miniature spiral bowl are all good works.

—Helen Schanroth