

# NELSON THOMPSON



*Paintings 1952 – 1986*

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Michael Dunn

FISHER GALLERY

Reeves Road, Pakuranga, Manukau City

28 February – 29 March 1992



# Acknowledgements

The family of the artist and the Fisher Gallery acknowledge the assistance which Queen Elizabeth II Arts Foundation NZ through the Visual Arts Media and Design Centre provided in the production of this catalogue. The balance has been donated by the artist's family. We are greatly indebted for the permission to reproduce works and to those who have previously loaned works for the exhibition.

Published in association with the exhibition Nelson Thompson  
Exhibition supported by the Fisher Gallery, Palmerston, Auckland  
City and held there from 10 February – 10 March 1982.

Nelson Thompson is represented by Joland and Gallery, Rotorua,  
Auckland, Joland Gallery, Porirua, Auckland and Eric Wilson  
Gallery, Porirua, Auckland.

Editorial: Frances Louise Johnson

Photography: Mark Adams

Design: Penelope/Graphic Systems

Art: Christopher Greenwood

Illustrated by: Gillie Knox

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ISBN 0-477-07565-7

Colour image: Eric Fyfe (aged 198)

grey and watercolours, 40/50/20

cm, 1981

## Foreword

How can those taken so much advantage from the opportunity of post-war service rehabilitation study in Nelson Thompson.

His own proof of his New Zealand origins and intentions, his recollections could bring to his study in Britain and Europe a remarkable spectrum of mind and vision, and an exposure to encounter and explore new ideas, new processes, new realities.

He had a rare capability of perceiving other places, other cultures and other people with thoroughness and honesty, visual acuity, sensitivity, curiosity and delight. He was a well-read man, who read widely and deeply, who was all his life constantly exploring into the origins of ideas, events and objects, whose fine craftsmanship was a prime vehicle of investigation and exploration, and often self-expression and pride in the quality of his making.

There are the attributes of an artist. There are also the attributes of an educator and it needs to be noted here many of our artists have been, or are, remarkable teachers - E H Field, Colin McCulloch, Ianthe Henderson, Ralph Huxley, Russell Clark, Robert Ellis, Maori Sirimani, Jim Allen, Cliff Whiting...

Nelson was one of this company.

His making was never a second-best occupation, but was a chosen commitment to his artistic practice. One informed the other. One measured the other. Nelson was passionately convinced that art was an essential function of any society, and thus an essential component of the education of all within a society.

He was a fine humanist who dedicated to the enhancement of the quality of life of his family, his friends, his colleagues and his people. But he was also a hardworking, intelligent and knowledgeable worker and it is fitting that this exhibition should present to us a perspective of his achievements.

Peter Smith/MBE

Chairman

Northern Regional Art Council



Portrait of the artist at work, 1962

# Nelson Thompson *Paintings 1952 – 1986*

*Michael Davis*

Nelson Thompson the painter is not, as well known as the general public as he should be considering the length of his working career and the quality of his output. Never one to adopt a high profile as a person, Thompson in his art and life remained more private than some of his contemporaries. Also, because he was for many years employed as an art teacher and because he did not need to promote his work vigorously, though he did exhibit as a regular habit in his later years, especially in the 1980s, he held regular one-man shows in Auckland. By this stage he had retired from Teachers Training College and was able to paint full time.

According to an assessment of his overall achievement as an artist has yet to be made. But, it can be said at once that Nelson Thompson was not in any sense an average painter. Rather he worked within known conventions of painting, as in subject and style while introducing his own observations and personal sensibility. Nelson Thompson's painting has a quiet sense of quality and an understated depicted feeling.

Nevertheless his work undergoes considerable change between his early studies of the 1950s and his last works of the 1980s. From an essentially direct, often monochrome style approach, he evolved to a more highly coloured and painterly style.

At no time was Thompson affiliated with a particular group of New Zealand painters. Yet, because he was based throughout all his working career at or near Auckland he was in touch with the main developments in contemporary New Zealand painting. He exhibited frequently with the Auckland Society of Arts of which he was a member, though in later years he preferred to show at private dealer galleries, such as John Lavan's Gallery, New Union and Gallery Pacific. His painting was occasionally reproduced, for example in the *New Zealand Herald*, but was in almost entirely individual attention.

Nelson Thompson was mainly a landscape painter. This said, it must be added that his range included graphic design, figure studies and still life. His still-life was, even more than that of Frances Hodgkins, set in landscape with a feeling of space, light and atmosphere. For example, his paintings and drawings of flowers and plants are not shown out and removed from nature, placed in vases and put on tables. Rather, they seem incorporated as if still growing, free of constraints of home and domesticity. Yet, Thompson had a liking for the way man-made forms could mould the land, intrude upon it and suggest a history of interaction. His view of landscape does not exclude the man, but is more evocative, perhaps even nostalgic, of the past. Rather machinery, rather more

harbour and ships' sails, such things for him suggested the associations of time and transience.

There comes quickly a sense that Nelson Thompson was in many respects a conventional neo-romantic painter. In this his works are among ablest in English art in his visual background and training. The revival of a romantic mood in British painting of the 1930s and 1940s provides a necessary framework for his beginnings as an artist. It also provides the basis for the degree of incorporation and choice of subjects, especially in his paintings of the 1950s.

Thompson preferred to sketch from specific subjects, often drawing them out the open in centres of studios. From these he would develop the larger, finished versions at a later date. Even so, much of his painting is small in scale, domestic rather than public in aspiration. Frequently he favoured pine and oak, or watercolour rather than oil as a medium. Consequently there was a close match between his technique and the modest actual size of his imagery. In his work of working Nelson Thompson has affinities with English painters of the 1930s and 1940s like Paul Nash or, one might add, the expatriate New Zealanders Frances Hodgkins. In this his work has considerably more the character of Auckland painting of the 1930s and 1940s. Even the early domestic paintings of Billie McIvorish remained small outside 1940s.

In his later works, Thompson's late style involves enlarging the physical size of his painting to any great extent. Rather, in his later paintings, the imagery is large in relation to the format resulting in an increased feeling of formality, matched by a more general elevation. In these works he achieves a freedom in his mature studies which is more dramatic and comparable with the related imagery of

Geoffrey Skene and Pa Hasty of earlier time.

Interestingly, although there is a powerful landscape emphasis in Thompson's art, he cannot be called a regionalist. True, most of his subjects are New Zealand ones, but he does not focus upon national icons, or subjects chosen for their characteristic national features. Instead, it seems that nature in general rather than particularity is his main concern. The sense of place emerges without self-conscious emphasis, and is the more effective for that fact. Only very late in his career, notably in the Rainbow Warrior paintings does any overt political message appear in his art. But there is always an underlying concern for nature, conservation and harmony between the individual and the environment.

His painting is not an isolated development either locally or in terms of British post-war painting. His years in London and time at the Chelsea School of Art had an enduring impact on his development as an artist and enabled him to have first-hand contact with the work of Henry Moore, Graham Sutherland, Edward Bawden, Eric Ravilinn, Paul Nash and John Piper, among others. He developed there his love of line thoughtfulness which was deepened by a study of Old Master drawings at the British Museum. On his return to New Zealand he began to adapt what he had seen and learnt to local subjects and conditions.



Breakfast on the Beach, 1868  
oil on canvas, 100 x 100  
cm. (40 x 40 in.)



All Saints Church, Bristol (1864)  
oil on canvas, 100 x 100 cm  
(100 x 100)

# Thompson and Neo-Romanticism

The Neo-Romantic movement in British painting can be traced back to the late 1920s and 1930s. Essentially this kind of painting is figurative and often landscape based. It can be seen as somewhat conservative in its attempt to preserve a tradition of Englishness in mood and subject in the face of European and American modernist art. While acknowledging, and even responding to, darker painting, Neo-Romantic art requires the retention of subject matter and associations in its imagery. The ancestry of British Neo-Romanticism can be found in the works of William Blake, Samuel Palmer, John Constable and Turner: its important document in the reconstruction of a romantic past with a value for the present was the publication of the book *British Romanticism* edited by John Piper in 1947.

Not only was John Piper an important spokesperson for Neo-Romanticism he was himself a highly visible and influential painter when Nelson Thompson studied in London in the late 1930s. Equally prominent and influential was Paul Nash, whose paintings and graphic works were to receive a life-long appeal for Thompson. It was a difficult period, too, that the work of Francis Hodgkins was most highly prized and widely exhibited in London. Piper saw Hodgkins in his late work as a Neo-Romantic painter, even reproducing one of her gouaches in colour in his booklets along with a painting by Graham Sutherland. Piper described Hodgkins as a 'subjective painter of restricted feeling and associations of decay and distance from domestic home buildings and implement'.

Significantly Piper saw her work as embodying feelings brought about by the trauma of World War Two, a response that is readily visible in his own paintings of ruined British churches and monuments destroyed by German bombing. This suggested the potential of Neo-Romantic art to have a political dimension by evoking feelings of outrage and indignation.

British Neo-Romanticism preferred subjects with a history, where the present was seen as a continuity the past – a quality Piper found in the works of Samuel Palmer, an artist deeply admired by Thompson. In Piper's focused architectural subjects, the topographical aspects are overshadowed by sentiment and nostalgia. By dramatic chiaroscuro, his emphasis on decay, mystery, and melancholy mood Piper leads his works with Neo-Romantic emotion. This kind of presentation, along with the architectural subject-matter, is relevant to some of Nelson Thompson's late work of the 1950s.

One group of works where such ideas emerge is of church interiors. Thompson found in the Gothic Revival forms of Augustus Pugin churches the right kind of subject and associations for his Neo-Romantic interests. Here he was able to continue, as had Piper, the architectural forms with an evocative, landscape environment of dark trees, neglected grounds, decreasing light and dramatic lighting. Of these paintings, *All Saints Church, Church 194 (cat. 5)* is an important example. Like Piper, Thompson has drawn *All Saints* with pen lines which



diffuse architectural forms like the transept and tower that this is not an orthodox architectural drawing any more than are Piper's related works. Instead, his broad use of chiaroscuro leads to certain qualities of deep shadow (strongly put across church interiors) and helps to merge it with the gloomy, opaque trees and grassy areas shown. In addition Thompson has picked out areas of the spire, tower and gable in white body-colour, as he has some of the grassy areas, not in a logical fashion but with a feeling for mood and sentiment. By employing emotional colouring, he transforms the image from a comforting scene to one that conjures up thoughts of death, of history, of those who have lived and worshipped here and who have now passed away without trace – except for these fragile remains. This reflective, melancholic mood is characteristic of New Romantic art, especially when combined, as here, with the associations of Christianity, the spiritual and the Gothic.

All Saints Church, Wincob is not an isolated example. Thompson's St John College Chapel 1987 (cat. 89) is in much the same manner, even recalling, in its combination of beautiful of woods with incidents of gothic detail, Piper's own ecclesiastical related, more coloured church subjects like East Cape Angel 1985 (cat. 28) carry this subject matter into a slightly later period. In this instance the ellipsoidal church has an air of neglect, the grounds are overgrown, the picture frame almost submerged in weeds. Only the marble angel gives a presence – though not one living, but cold and lifeless – reminder of the past, not the present.

In New Zealand painting the colonial church and graveyard were visited by a number of artists influenced



John Piper  
St John's Church, Wincob 1987  
oil 104 x 107  
Ulster Gallery, London  
by kind permission of the artist

by British Neo-Romanticism. The most prominent of these is William Turner whose *Rain, Steam, and Great Bridges* series in the Conway 1996 (Blackburn City Art Gallery collection) features chimney-shaped, a neglected graveyard and warlike angels. In fact, it was the subject that prominent regional experts which are less important in Thompson's work. But the direct dimension of Thompson's painting, as well as his use of watercolour, bring to mind more the works of Eric Lee-Johnson than the large oils of Turner. Thompson would have been familiar with Lee-Johnson's watercolours at the Ashford Society of Arts exhibitions. Clearly Thompson and Lee-Johnson shared much the same sources in British art which both had studied at first hand in London.

Among other artists Thompson had in common with Lee-Johnson and another Ashford painter with whom he was friendly, John Haldenwood, was the dead tree. The main example in Thompson's work is *Dead Tree* 1907 (see 15), a large work in watercolour. An earlier, related sketch of leaf-strewn trees, I may well have been a study for this painting. For Thompson, as for Lee-Johnson, Haldenwood, Russell Clark and various other local exponents of this motif, the dead tree had strong emotive appeal fully in keeping with the Neo-Romantic spirit. Thompson was aware of the origins of the dead tree subject in British art, especially in the works of Graham Sutherland and Paul Nash.

The title *Dead Tree*, suggestive of destruction and ruin, evokes a response to the motif of the war-torn landscape. Thompson, here, probably aligns himself with those who see such wreckage not as progress but as warning, therefore condition. Finally

the prototype for this forlorn, pitiful presentation of war comes in in the First World War paintings of Paul Nash. In an official war notice, Nash invented landscapes like *The Menin Road*, or *We Are Making a New World Here* (British War Museum) where skeletal remains of battle survive only as bleached stumps standing in shell-pocked earth. No people are visible – only the pathetic marks of their passing. In another like *Dead Tree* it is as if war has been declared on the natural forces in the world as current landscape is profitably put to rest.

In *Dead Tree* Thompson has intensified the mood of his painting by bringing the main focus up close to the viewer so that we look past them to the empty spaces beyond in an accelerated perspectival dissolution. This pictorial device was used often by the Surrealists, notably Paul Elpideg, and here helps Thompson to give the scene a greater sense of tragedy by magnifying the scale of destruction. His colouration, yellow ochre and red, white, were symbolically so bring to mind the fire of the burnt oak, as in Christopher Perkins' *Forest Floor* 1904 (Blackburn City Art Gallery collection) the withering Rose-like thorns are a metaphor for the instrument of their destruction. Thompson's technique requires the use of pen lines to shape and animate the forms with movement in some kind of slow, death struggle. The mood Thompson achieves is the melancholic one of silent reflection as characteristic of landscapes by Graham Sutherland or Paul Nash.

Writing in the book *The Forest's Object*, edited by Anthony Pope (1986), Henry Moore observed 'A large piece of stone or wood placed almost anywhere at random in a field, orchard or garden immediately looks right and inspiring.' This observation helps to explain another part



*Dandelion River* (1997)  
oil, wax, marbled paper, 140 x 140  
cm, 55"

of the attraction itself now forms fuel for Thompson, and the New Romantics. The fused object provided a ready-made work of art filled with aesthetic and associative potential for subjective interpretation.

This helps explain a painting like *Polenidzeva Swamp* 1962 (cat. 16). The Moore-like appearance is apparent despite its New England origin. Indeed, made prominent and 'placed' in a landscape this swamp is like a natural carving, with its varied curves, protrusions and hollows. Ironically the artist made only the eye to find and record the form with all its potential meaning. Thompson's vision here, as in the preceding examples, remains in British as well as its local dimension. Also, it has the associative mobility of works like Lee Johnson's *She Face* in the C&G 1968 (cat. 17) where the viewer can read the image, according to associative response, as anthropomorphic. In both Thompson and Lee Johnson there are close relations with English literature in the alternative for interpretation in which the subconscious has a part to play.

This applies equally to works like *Enchanted Sea Form*, *Swampy Bay* 1962 (cat. 17) a type of subject also prominent in the watercolours of Lee Johnson. In its *Polenidzeva Swamp*, Thompson has selected the form found in nature because of its abstracted, life-like quality. The forms of wind and tide here, like the sculptor's chisel, hollowed parts of the surface, divided others, and in places really perforated them. By giving the forms a presence of scale and a strong sense of chiaroscuro, Thompson creates the 'tempting' natural artwork admired by Moore and associated British artists. It suggests up, along the forces of time and the inevitable mortality of all things. It can be seen almost as the aspiration of the more materialistic of

British art admired by Paul Nash, Asherland and Moore.

It is notable with all these subjects, whether the colonial describes the land swamps or delineated that they are old, irregular and unstable the quality (Piper once called 'Flowing Drapery'). They are in no sense dominating, and, taken collectively, have the stance the English writer Charles Darwin called neo-platonsm - a view that has its roots to be seen on the banks of rivers, valleys, columns and broken lines to which Thompson, like Piper, was so partial.

Other subjects which have similar qualities are old boats and boats, as in *The Boat Captives*, *Gloucester* 1960 (cat. 18) or *The Double Figure* 1962 (cat. 19) or *Gloucester Harbour Boat*, *East* 1964 (cat. 20). In these images the marks of man are shown mouldering away in fields where grass and weeds begin to define and break down the outlines of industry. Machinery, too, but in life-size, and, more extended and distant can be assimilated to the New Romantic taste. Comparable decaying farm implements and old agricultural machinery are found in Moore's (Madgwick) paintings of the 1950s. His, too, had no concern for the functional machine of the modern world which the excluded from his art.

Only when these mechanical creations are distant and put on the scrapheap do they allow the appropriate reflections on the inevitable decay of all material things - a reflection individualistic in mood and so sympathetic to the New Romantic's imagination. In such subjects, Nelson Thompson's sensitive, irregular line-work and broken, natural colour found full scope for expression.

This kind of painting and subject matter fell into critical disfavour in the late 1950s especially with Peter

Tennery, Director of the Auckland City Art Gallery. Tennery, unlike his predecessor, Eric Wetherhead, was critical of what he termed the 'Dead Tree and Old Colonial House School'. He felt that such images were illustrative and lacking in formal strength. His view reflected opinion in Britain at the time when this kind of painting went out of fashion internationally.

Tennery and others ignored the success of artists like Nelson Thompson in adapting the New Romantic style to New Zealand subjects and giving them a greater sense of history and meaning. It is precisely this kind of enhancement that lies behind the popular landscape works of contemporary photographers like Robin Muirison. Painters like Thompson helped to shape the way contemporary New Zealanders see their country and its heritage.



Old Highway, Rorobin Point, circa 1962  
 (Auckland City Art Gallery)  
 (Opp. 10)

## Thompson and Expressionism

Gradually, in the 1930s, Nelson Thompson's paintings became broader and more painterly in style. Three decades separate his watercolours like *Mount Adams* (1900) (cat. 28), where the past lines have disappeared and the image is built from areas of colour washed on with plenty of medium. Also, in this kind of painting there is an interest in the interaction of colours: was one was giving a merging of one into another. The signs of the artist's manufacture of the image are made bolder as the response of drawing and formal rendering of the subject. In fact, the paintings become Expressionist in feel. Another example of this change of mood is *Spencer (Newmarket Road)* (1933) (cat. 36). Here the broad sweeps of black establish the swirling shape of the meandering, but also convey something of the artist's response to the rigour and sweep of landscape. Comparatively the topographical aspect has been subordinated to Thompson's interpretation of the scene. In this approach to painting, based on European Expressionism, the artist is free to distort form, exaggerate colour and allow the viewer to sense the urgency of the creative process.

A similar Expressionist element is also found in his comparatively few oil landscapes, like *Red Waterfall*, *Green Stream* (c.1931) (cat. 34) or *Mount Adams*, *Whangarei Heads* (c.1931) (cat. 35). His water shows an awareness of both French and German Expressionism in the use of thick outlines, primary colours applied thickly and with the brush as process rather than what is seen. Thompson was aware that such an approach to painting

had a lineage in European art going back to the Fauves and the Post-Expressionists, notably Van Gogh.

The main exponent of this style in New Zealand was the Lithuanian born painter Basil Spence who made notable studies of coastal scenes at Lyttelton and Kaikoura in the late 1930s and early 1940s. In Spence's imagery, as in Thompson's, colour is pushed beyond the limits of realism and is guided more by feeling than concern with naturalism. The landscape becomes a model for the painter to interpret more or less freely. By this stage, though,



*Spencer (Newmarket Road)* 1933  
(oil, watercolours, 47 x 60)  
(cat. 36)

Expressionism was more a critical style than a new movement in modern art. The New-Expressionism became an alternative to the hard-edge Surface of Abstract painters, like Dan Flavin, who were exhibiting in the mid 1960s.

The clearest indication of Nelson Thompson's new-found interest in Expressionism comes in his watercolours of flowers and flower heads dating to the late 1960s, and the *Abstract and Earth and Sky* series of the 1970s. In these works there is an obvious debt to the watercolour landscapes and flower paintings of Emil Nolde. Writing in 1984 Thompson recalled, 'Initially, I discovered the work of Emil Nolde, the German Expressionist, whose brilliant brushwork of flowers and landscapes on wet paper are among the finest in the watercolour medium. There was a path to follow and so I studied a technique of painting directly with a brush without any preliminary drawing onto paper thoroughly saturated with water.'

Nolde developed a style of watercolour painting in which colour provides the main means of expression. His landscapes are formed by washes and runs of colour, applied wet-on-wet, so that the colour obscures almost the identity and function of form in most figurative abstraction. Nolde's flower paintings are close-ups, but lack the detail we expect of close range photography: instead washes of colour re-create colour than depict individual flowers. It was this example which gave Thompson a specific direction to follow.

Writing of this procedure in 1984 Thompson noted 'The subject matter I chose (flowers and plant forms from my own garden). Carefully chosen natural motifs were considered less direct paintings where the formalist then disappeared in favour of controlled shapes in a range of personal colour choices. The end result were paintings of

multiple shapes and colours inseparable but initially not having a life of their own. Thompson had a long-standing enthusiasm for gardens and had made more formal studies of plants and flowers in drawings of the 1950s, and early 1960s, but his new paintings transferred them to water and washes.

*Orange and Yellow Flower-Head* (c. 1968 (cat. 32)) is a good example of these new watercolours. Thompson painted this and many related works such as *People Flower Centre* (c. 1968 (cat. 33)) on sheets of Japanese paper – a heavy paper able to take a washing in water. After wetting the paper in a bath of cold water he could then lay colour on in liquid washes. An essential part of this approach is its direction – for the artist must be skilled with the use of wet-on-wet washes. Of this process Thompson wrote 'I found that this method called for a highly developed technical facility for as the paper dried, one such succeeding wash of colour created in a different way. There was a precise moment when one wash could be applied to form advantage. This was technique called for precision and discipline to keep a fresh and spontaneous look to the finished work. The pen had been eliminated and was now completely lost drawing.'

In these paintings Thompson negates the flower-head, face form, and fills the whole background space of the picture surface. The shallowness of spatial depth and the way the patterns of the flower-head spread across the paper give a more abstract, less natural compositional emphasis. The *Flower-Head* paintings are more abstract than his earlier New Romantic works and more modernist in their approach to a shallow surface composition. The awareness of surface pattern and abstract formal values is very apparent in both *Orange and Yellow Flower-Head*



Orange and Yellow-From Black and White  
 Wassily Kandinsky 1911  
 (oil - 85)





*Dreadful* (from the *History* 1995)  
watercolor, 40 1/2 x 70  
1995, 90

and *Spring Flower Country*. It is also noteworthy here that Thompson is working in a series of related images which collectively add up to more than the content of any one work. This, too, is typical of much modernist painting and shows his changed approach to picture-making.

*Orange and Yellow Flower-Mead* is impregnated with sunny warmth, seasonal colours. More than in his earlier paintings the imagery is a vehicle for communicating colour. The drawn component, once so important, is reduced, the pen outlining finished. These flower images are hardly seasonal and lead us into a deeper stage of colour and implied fragrance. Yet, as in all flower paintings, there is the sense of transience, of the fleeting moment of beauty with its infinite cycle leading to decay and death. These paintings are in spite of this as we watch, seemingly hovering just out of reach. They present a different sense of time in which seasonal cycles are more enduring and constant than specific climatic days. This feeling helps to deepen and extend the warm component which was the Nelson Thompson of the long twenties.

His landscapes of comparable techniques, like *Earth and Sky No. 1* (c. 1938) (see. 14) allow readers of rich colour to flow across and down the paper suggesting, in their variation of line and hue, the shape of clouds, of light breaking through, of rain falling and of dry and water meeting. These works, like Reed Noble's, sweep us free of any human individualism and human handicraft. They have the generality and abstraction now found in the place of Thompson's art. As with the flower paintings, in these landscapes he is much more surface conscious than in his earlier works. The calls of colour flow across and down the paper, they are no drawings: a line or edge has seem to expand outwardly. It is as if the total image has been stopped and that we see a part rather than the whole. This



*Earth, Water, Sky (Hawaii)* (Hawaii) (c. 1938)  
(see. 14) (see. 14)

is a quality found in much abstraction of the late 1940s, for instance in the works of Helen Frankenthalen, an American painter whose work Thompson admired. Like Frankenthalen, Thompson for a time used acrylic paint on prepared canvas enabling him to carry through his experimental methods in a medium more congenial to him than oils.

After 1945 he created a series of landscapes arranged across the surface in bands, with alternating areas of light and dark to suggest horizontals. In 1946 he said that these works 'developed into the *Earth, Water, Sky* series where I modifications of the visible world such as hills, mountains, hills, clouds and sky under changing conditions of light and atmosphere.' An example of these paintings is *Earth, Water, Sky (Hawaii)* (see. 14) (see. 14).

## The later years

After having returned from a trip to the United States, Britain and Europe in 1985, Thompson felt the need to re-examine his approach to painting and return to a more descriptive style of landscapes. In these works like *Cape Whaiti Bay of Islands* (c.1985-1986, fig. 10) he re-introduced foregrounds and backgrounds, and gentle profiles of hillsides. In this example, Thompson used the acrylic medium on primed canvas to give a more solid feel to the colours. It is noticeable in this painting that one of his main concerns is with the patterns made by the water, meadows and pastures. He has coded each of these in a specific colour and tone so that the landscape takes on a sharp, clear, almost decorative aspect.

This kind of reduction of landscapes to bands of colour was characteristic of the abstract prints of Brian White, among others. The work is glowing, accessible but rather bland. Perhaps it is not surprising that similar works were among Nelson Thompson's most commercial successes. His procedure with these paintings involved preliminary studies made on the spot, plus some use of photography.

Among the artist's later works are the large *Angaitene River* (c.1985-1986, fig. 11) and the *Rainbow Warrior Painting No. 1* (1986 (c.1987), fig. 12). The *Rainbow Warrior Painting No. 1* Thompson combines his characteristic panoramic treatment of landscapes (here with symbolic images of peace and hope – the dove and rainbow). In this work, unusual because of its clear reference to a specific political incident, the artist achieves a synthesis of elements that had

potential for further development. In his last unfinished painting of *Whitford Beach* he produced the juxtaposition of hard-edge coastal images with flower-head shapes suggesting a way his work might have evolved.

In finding through his *Rainbow Warrior Painting No. 1* an articulation for his feelings of social concern and protest Thompson was, using a direction found increasingly in New Zealand painting of the 1980s, instead of standing back from issues, as in the likes of Hardy and Ralph Hotere, to make a less raw painting as a means of self-reassurance raising about social and political issues. Characteristically Thompson here was not abstract but conventional, finding in nature images of calm and order. This seems in retrospect to be an appropriate note with which to conclude his career as a painter.

It is no doubt coincidental that Rita Angus used the dove hovering above the landscape in one of her last paintings, *High* (c.1984-85) (National Art Gallery collection). In that painting, too, there is an element of protest against the destruction of the government of the old British New Zealand Company, Wellington. Her dove, as Thompson's, has a message of peace for the living and hope for the dead. In both cases the dove is in flight, pointing here the successful upturn in the national flagging a spiritual journey – the passage of souls after death to the next world.



*Andrey Mironov* (b. 1986)  
white enameled metal, metal wire  
100 x 40 x 10 cm

## *Curriculum Vitae*

- 1940 Born 21 February, Gibraltar
- 1940-49 *Marcus's study, Gibraltar and Italy*
- 1941-42 2nd MCEP Middle East, Italy, England
- 1945 Central School of Arts and Crafts, London
- 1946-49 Chelsea School of Art, National Diploma of Design
- 1950 Institute of Education, London University, Art Teachers Diploma  
November 1952
- 1952 Working teacher, Auckland Society of Art
- 1953-54 Art Department, Auckland Primary Teachers College, Junior Lecturer
- 1955-56 Foundation art teacher, Haines High School
- 1958-60 Freelance graphic designer, London
- 1960-61 Foundation art teacher, Hakeke College
- 1961 Junior Lecturer, Visual Arts Department, Secondary Teachers College, Upper
- 1970 Applied Plastic lecturer
- 1971 Study leave - (Haines School of Art, London)
- 1971 Head of Visual Arts Department, Secondary Teachers College, Upper
- 1975 Elveden Fellow, Auckland Society of Art
- 1979 Retired
- 1982-83 Eye vision able education
- 1984 Travelled overseas
- 1988 Working overseas a group exhibition at (Charlotte St Gallery)
- 1989 Died 1 July, Auckland

## *Major Exhibitions*

- Auckland Society of Arts, one-man shows
- Nov 1967 watercolours, drawings and graphics
- Oct 1968 watercolours and drawings
- Feb 1962 acrylics, watercolours collages -  
with Carol Wapland  
drawings - 1966-68
- June 1963 drawings - 1966-68
- Wellington Gallery Wellington
- June 1965 printings and drawings
- Victoria University Council of Adult Education  
1963 one-man show
- Christchurch Fox People Association  
1969 (All New Zealand Painters)
- New Vision Gallery, one-man shows
- May 1976 (Flowerhead series)
- May 1977 (Last, Many sky series)
- Roller Gallery, group shows
- 1970, 1976, 1978, 1981, 1983, 1982
- Swinging Arts Society, one-man show
- 1970 Festival exhibition
- Manurewa Art Gallery
- 1971 watercolours

*David Lauder Gallery, one man show*  
1974 *Blackhead and Pinelands series*

*Baker Street Gallery*  
1975, 1982 *gum prints*

*JECCA Travelling Exhibition*  
1981 *South, West, Sky collages*

*John Lauder Gallery, one man show:*  
Nov 1987 *oil, watercolours, drawings and*  
*figure studies*  
Nov 1989 *watercolours and drawings*  
July 1991 *Pinelands and Blackhead series,*  
*watercolours and drawings*  
Oct 1993 *landscapes and Blackhead watercolours*  
*and drawings*  
Aug 1995 *South, West, Sky series*

*Gallery/Francis*  
1983, 1984, 1986 *Clonal Images*  
1989 *watercolours from the 1980s*

## Collections

### Public

*Southland City Art Gallery*  
1983 - *Pinelands* (oil, pen and pencil)  
1984 - *John Lauder from Thompson/Scott pen and pencil*  
1991 - *Pinelands's watercolours*

*National Art Gallery, Wellington*  
1987 - *Oil Painters, Auckland pen and wash*  
1991 - *Figures Series No 1, watercolours*  
1995 - *Kaitake Islands charcoal/drawing*

### Private

*Art New Zealand*  
*Heather Collection*  
1981  
*David*  
*Penrose High School*  
*Pukekohe College*  
*Epuna College of Education*

### Overseas

*Australia, United Kingdom, Canada, France,*  
*Switzerland and United States of America.*

## Catalogue of works

### 1. *Contemps en Indes* 1962

pen, watercolour  
140 x 100  
signed and dated

### 2. *Boat Race/Regatta* 1962

pen, wex, watercolour  
170 x 100  
signed and dated

### 3. *Enchil las Flores, Puerto Rey* 1963

pen, wex, watercolour  
100 x 100  
signed and dated



*The Blue Lagoon, Guibara 1963 (see 4)*

### 4. *Guibara, Maricao Road View* 1963

pen, watercolour  
100 x 100  
signed and dated

### 5. *Signal Station, Guibara Hill* 1963

pen, watercolour  
100 x 100  
signed and dated

### 6. *The Blue Lagoon, Guibara* 1963

pen, watercolour  
100 x 100  
signed and dated  
Ed and Mrs Schuchling, New York

### 7. *The Artist's Workshop* 1963

pen, watercolour  
100 x 100  
signed and dated  
Marion Mc N Coy, Auckland

### 8. *View from O'Hara's Hall, Auckland* 1963

pen, watercolour  
100 x 100  
signed and dated

### 9. *All Saints Church, Auckland* 1963

pen, wex, watercolour  
100 x 100  
signed and dated  
Ed and Mrs N. McWilliam, Auckland

10. St. John College Chapel 1957

pen, watercolor  
10 1/2 x 10 1/2  
signed, undated

11. New York State Hall, Albany, N.Y. 1958

pen, watercolor  
10 1/2 x 10 1/2  
signed, undated

12. Church House 1957

pen, ink, watercolor  
10 1/2 x 10 1/2  
signed, undated

13. St. Charles Chapel 1957

pen, ink, watercolor  
10 1/2 x 10 1/2  
signed, undated

14. Anthony House 1957

pen, watercolor  
10 1/2 x 10 1/2  
signed, undated

15. Site of the St. Charles 1958

pen, watercolor  
10 1/2 x 10 1/2  
signed, undated

16. Palazzina, Hong Kong 1962

pen, watercolor  
10 1/2 x 10 1/2  
signed, undated



Palazzina, Hong Kong 1962 (pen, ink)

17. St. Michael's Cathedral, since 1962

pen, watercolor  
10 1/2 x 10 1/2  
signed, undated

18. St. Michael's since 1962

charcoal  
10 1/2 x 10 1/2  
signed, undated

19. St. Michael's, Russian Point since 1962

charcoal  
10 1/2 x 10 1/2  
signed, undated



22. *Reynolds River, Middle River Confluence* PH2  
ink, watercolor  
40 x 60  
signed and dated

23. *Progenitor Point circa 1861*  
ink, watercolor  
100 x 120  
not signed, not dated

24. *St John New Hope Church, Reindeer, near Glenora* PH2  
pen, ink, watercolor  
80 x 100  
signed and dated  
Rie Marie Wilson, Auckland

25. *East Cape Angel* PH2  
pen, watercolor  
40 x 60  
signed and dated  
Rie Marie Thompson, Auckland

26. *Mount Manganui* PH2  
pen, watercolor  
100 x 120  
signed and dated  
Rie Douglas Ross, Auckland

27. *Central West Island Landscape* circa PH2  
pen, watercolor  
80 x 90  
not signed, not dated

28. *Shower (Showerhead) Puddle* PH2  
ink, watercolor  
40 x 60  
signed and dated

29. *Alameda Pool circa 1861*  
oil on canvas  
40 x 70  
initialed

30. *St. Kewia, Whangarei Puddle* circa PH2  
oil on canvas  
80 x 70  
signed

31. *Red Stream, Great Barrier* circa PH2  
oil on board  
40 x 60  
initialed

32. *Northland Landscape* PH2  
oil on board  
70 x 100  
signed and dated

33. *Red Wharfedale Great Barrier* circa PH2  
oil on board  
70 x 100  
initialed

34. *Change and Follow, Shoredale* circa PH2  
watercolor  
80 x 70  
not signed, not dated

16. Purple House Christmas circa 1960

watercolour

140 x 70

signed, not dated

17. Earth and Sky No. 3 circa 1960

watercolour

140 x 70

signed, not dated

18. Flowerland/circa 1972

watercolour

140 x 70

signed, not dated

Mrs and Mrs Noel Brown, Auckland

19. Flowerland/circa (No. 1) circa 1972

watercolour

140 x 70

signed, not dated

20. From the Earth, Water, Sky Motion series No. 13

circa 1972

watercolour

140 x 70

signed, not dated

21. Earth, Water Sky series Three-Motion No. 12 1962

acrylic on primed canvas

100 x 100

signed and dated

22. Cape Whaiti, Bay of Islands, (Coastal Image series)

circa 1960

acrylic on primed canvas

40 x 80

signed, not dated

Mrs and Mrs Bruce Allen, Auckland

23. Rangiwha, Rangiwha 1960

acrylic on primed canvas

80 x 120

signed, not dated

Margaret Coult and Bruce, Auckland

24. Rainbow Window No. 3 1960

acrylic on primed canvas

80 x 120

signed and dated on reverse

Auckland City Council collection

## Graphic works

1. *Shed Cards/Clubs*, London 1940
2. *Island Farm*, woodcut/printing, 1941
3. *Island Farm Design* 1946 (not accepted)
4. *Cups Design* for Pelorus Press, Auckland, 1950s
5. *BBC Letters/Countdown* (various), 1959
6. *Frederick Cyril Illustration for 'Land' magazine*  
Mullins Company, 1959
7. *BBC Production in Schools* (various items), 1961
8. *Island Church, Christmas 1964* (various) and for  
ME Federation of University Women
9. *Shakespeare Calligraphy*, Auckland Festival Exhibition  
Ponsonby, 1964/John Lough Gallery, Auckland



*Shakespeare Calligraphy, pencil, 1966*

## Italian Drawings, 1940s

1. *Giordano, Venice*
2. *View of Grand Canal, Venice*
3. *Isorotto/Giordano, Venice*
4. *Page of five drawings, Florence*
5. *The Registry, Florence*
6. *Italian Courtyard*
7. *Florentine Buildings*

Unless otherwise stated works  
are in the collection of the artist's family

All measurements are in millimetres,  
height before stretch

Unless otherwise stated all works are on  
white paper

