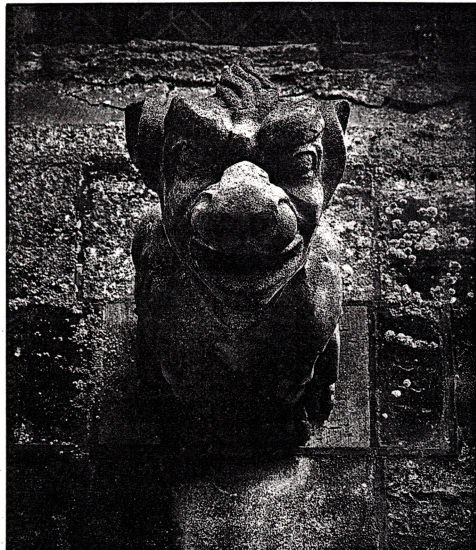


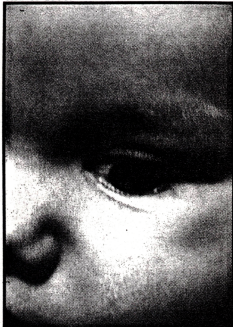
Symbolism through the lens



PAT BASKETT visits the Fisher Gallery to see how art is being defined by a group of photographers.

SYMBOLISM as a movement in art history is relatively on the sideline. One classic text doesn't even acknowledge the word.

In New Zealand our enlightenment comes from the exhibition *Odilon Redon: the Enchanted Stone*, which made a transitory appearance at the City Gallery at the end of 1990.



But the word needn't be embedded in late 19th century French poetry and painting. At the Fisher Gallery in Pakuranga, Tim Renner has dusted it off and applied it to photography — here and now.

Fourteen artists — the word "photographer" appears too restricted in this context — responded to his brief to provide a work of symbolist intent. By this Renner means imbued with something that is personal, enigmatic, mysterious, something which provides "a window to the soul. . . in such a way that works in this exhibition might be described as neo-classical or romantic and/or expressionist."

That sounds a little heavy. On a guided tour of the show Renner remarks that appreciation is enriched by an awareness of the passage of art history.

Remembering those severe black and red drawings and the lithographs of Redon showing severed heads, skeletal homunculi with wistful faces, and nightmarish scenes, you will look in vain at the Fisher Gallery.

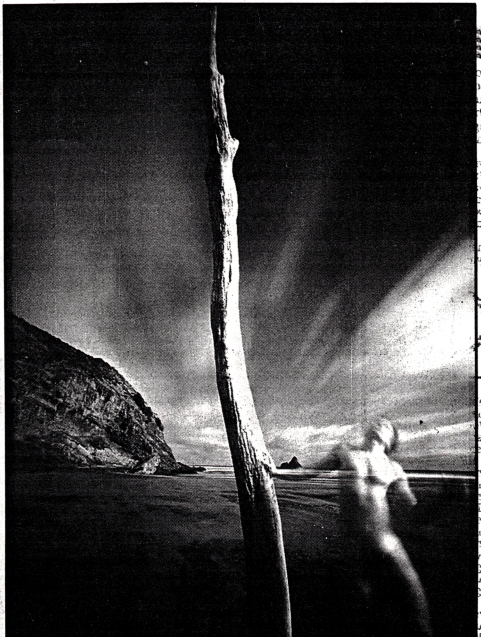
If 19th century symbolists were interested in the subconscious, the dream world and the socially taboo, this lot are considerably tamer. But still interesting. Renner comments in the catalogue notes that "in this exhibition there are a number of approaches taken by the artists represented. Some are photo opportunists and some are stage designers who attempt to control almost every element the viewer will see."

Mary Macpherson is a Wellington photographer who exhibits a meticulously stage-designed series of images related to David Gray, the man convicted of the Aramoana shootings.

They are not what you might expect. Rather than dwelling on the violence they view the event and the psyche of Gray from a deeply personal, psychological perspective. The images are pale — white on white — of an almost translucent delicacy, and their enigmatic quality makes them the most "symbolist" in the show.

It's interesting to see the photographs of Laurence Aberhart included here. His subject matter has always been what is described as "realist," yet in this context the hyper-sensitivity to detail that his technique enables makes them not out of place.

Aberhart uses a "view" camera that was made early in this century. The photographs it takes require extremely long exposure times — sometimes 20 minutes or more — and a tripod. Each print is a "contact" print — an unenlarged version of the negative. This means that the reproduction of the detail is uncanny, revealing more than



• Ole Toft's *Karekare*, taken with a pin-hole camera.

would be remembered from seeing the actual scene or object. And herein lies their relevance to this exhibition. Aberhart's photos imbue their object with an extraordinary psychological power.

A very different technique is used by Ole Toft and Darren Glass. Both made their own pin-hole cameras. These are nothing more than a light-proof box into which a film is placed, and a tiny hole made through which the film is exposed. There is no viewfinder, lens or aperture and only a primitive method of shutter speed.

Glass's camera has six pin-holes which are exposed simultaneously. The resulting image is complex and overlaid, with an emotional depth that Renner describes as

"Blakean." Jennifer French, holder of the Meet at Chandon residency in France, sent back three elegantly framed small landscape photographs. Their intensity is very different from that of Patrick Reynolds, who isolates a small portion of a baby's face.

It is not easy to discover the symbolist element in all the works in this exhibition. Some — like Haru Sameshima's *Pohutukawa* and *Rose Garden*, which is a design made up entirely of postcards — appear more conceptual than symbolist. The exhibition closes on Sunday; at 2 pm that day Reynolds and Sameshima will discuss their work and issues facing photographers today.

OPERA comes to the Maidment Theatre on Friday evening in a showcase performance by diploma in performing arts students, with guest artists Tupe Tam-Yam and Brian McKay.

Excerpts from Dvorak's *Rusalka*, Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Auber's *Fra Diavolo*, Massenet's *Werther*, Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffmann* and Rossini's *Barber of Seville* have been directed for stage by Carmel Carroll, Robert Alderton and Michele Hine.

Musical direction is by Rosemary Barnes and the pianists are Timothy Evans and Robert Wiremu.

The Chamber Music Society and the New Zealand String Quartet are having a busy weekend. On Saturday evening at the Maidment Centre they will play Haydn's

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String Quartet in C major, Beethoven's String Quartet in E flat and, with Tamas Veszmas on piano, the Brahms Quintet in B minor.

On Sunday at the Carlton Hotel Peters Quinter on clarinet, joins them for Brahms Quintet in B minor.

Also on the programme is Haydn's String Quartet in G minor and Borodin's String Quartet No 2 in D.

Memories of Second World War will be evoked at the Pumphouse, Takapuna, on Monday afternoon with a concert of songs from the era: the soloists are Tessa May Brown, Fay Hadden, Albert Sword, Brian McKay and Moyra Rea. And at St George's Presbyterian Church, also in Takapuna, on Sunday afternoon, the North Shore Male

Choir will sing in support of the North Shore Hospital chaplaincy appeal.

Actors, musicians, dancers, mask-makers and stage managers have been busy this month at theatre workshops run by Art for Mental Health. The results of their efforts can be seen at a performance at the Freemans Bay Community Hall on Sunday.

Diploma in drama students at the University of Auckland present a season of short and "chevy" plays — entitled *Jellyfruits of Reason* — until July 1 at 1 pm and 8 pm daily.

There is more student drama at the Glendowie College Hall with the school's musical production *Slater React*, playing until July 1. And the Uxbridge Children's Theatre presents a musical fantasy *Papertown Paperchase* by David Wood, directed by Anna Salkeld, at the Uxbridge Gallery until July 8.