

# McWhannell displays personal obsessions

An exhibition by Auckland artist Richard McWhannell is opening at Pakuranga's Fisher Gallery on Saturday.

The exhibition brings together over 60 paintings, sculptures and lithographs.

A selection of these feature the artist's recurring self-portrait theme.

Mr McWhannell says he paints self-portraits because of his love of painting, not to promote himself.

"By painting myself I can scrutinise the familiar, make small distortions to enliven the image."

His early work evolved through his contact with other New Zealand painters.

"And in a sense (New Zealand artists) Toss Woollaston's work represents my love of Cezanne, and Tony Fomison's work my love of Goya.

"But my influences are far more complex than that, and so are theirs."

Mr McWhannell says his influences have mostly been local ones which is an excellent way to share with others of the same culture.

Mr McWhannell was born in Akaroa in 1952 and lived in several towns before settling in Auckland a

decade ago.

He graduated from art school in Christchurch in the early 1970s.

In 1982 the artist travelled to Europe on a Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council grant.

Mr McWhannell's work has gone on show in over 20 solo and group exhibitions.

Included in this exhibition is a large sculpture called "Dear Devil" which was created for this year's Stone Sculpture Symposium in Christchurch.

Mr McWhannell was one of the original group of carvers invited to the 1986 symposium at Western Springs.

He says he sculpts as well as paints because he is unable to limit himself to just one form of expression.

"Painting and sculpture, although fundamentally different — one illusion, the other fact — are imperative to my work.

"The relationship between the two media is symbiotic."

Mr McWhannell says his work is an investigation of his personal obsessions.

Get a glimpse of them before the exhibition ends on November 27.