

ALAN PEARSON

Alan Pearson (b.1929, d. 2019) is a key figure in the history of Aotearoa New Zealand's 20th and 21st century art. He has been one of the outstanding proponents of pure painting in Aotearoa. The artist's work is densely complex, restlessly explorative, and remains true to the ethos of Neo-Expressionism; alive with gesture, emotion and insight.

Pearson's training at the University of Canterbury's School of Fine Arts (ILAM) coincided with the arrival of the Lithuanian artist and educator Rudi Gopas in 1959. This placed Pearson in context with the likes of Philip Clairmont, Tony Fomison, and Allen Maddox - a veritable blossoming of Neo-Expressionists during this period.

Pearson's idiosyncratic vision and individualism, further honed at London's Royal Academy Schools in London in 1965-6 and a lifetime of development, makes him impossible to categorise with ease. The artist's work ranges from abstraction to portraiture and everything is tackled with the same vigour and precision.

There is a profound theatricality in Pearson's art, not merely in the gestural bravura of his brushwork, but in the direct reference (the marvellous, immediate and intimate sketches of his beloved opera, reminiscent in spirit of similar sketches by Walter Sickert or Degas) and allusion (the framing proscenium arch that makes a stage of Pearson's well-known 1986 self-portrait 'Exit from a Cold Theatre' in the collection of the Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū).

- Words by Dr. Andrew Paul Wood

Pearson's works are held in the collections of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Pōneke Wellington; Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki; Hocken Pictorial Collections, University of Otago; University of Otago Medical School, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland; Dunedin Public Art Gallery; Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū; Te Manawa, Te Papa-i-Oea Palmerston North; The Arts House Trust, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland; Waikato Museum, Kirikiriroa Hamilton; Alexander Turnbull Library, The National Library of New Zealand, Wellington; Aigantighe Art Gallery, Timaru; Chartwell Collection, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland; Forrester Gallery, Oamaru; The Suter Te Aratoi o Whakatu, Nelson; The New Zealand Portrait Gallery, Wellington; The Rutherford Trust Collection, Wellington and the Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, England.

BIOGRAPHY

BORN: 1929, Liverpool, England (d. 2019 Noosa)

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EDUCATION: Diploma Fine Arts (First class Hons), University of Canterbury, Christchurch; Royal Academy Schools, London, England

AWARDS: Doug Moran Portrait Awards, Australia - Finalist (2006); Artist in Residence, Dunedin Public Art Gallery/Otago Polytechnic (1986); Artist in Residence, Tai Poutini Polytechnic, Greymouth (1993); National Bank Portrait Prize (1978, 1979); Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council Travel Grant (1976); Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council Scholarship (1964-65)

COLLECTIONS: Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington; Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki; Hocken Pictorial Collections, University of Otago; University of Otago Medical School, Auckland; Dunedin Public Art Gallery; Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu; Te Manawa, Palmerston North; The James Wallace Arts Trust, Auckland; Waikato Museum, Hamilton; Alexander Turnbull Library, The National Library of New Zealand, Wellington; Aigantighe Art Gallery, Timaru; Chartwell Collection, Auckland; Forrester Gallery, Oamaru; The Suter Te Aratoi o Whakatu, Nelson; The New Zealand Portrait Gallery, Wellington; The Rutherford Trust Collection, Wellington; The Todd Corporation Art Collection, Wellington; Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, England

SELECTED PUBLIC EXHIBITIONS: Solo exhibition, "Master of Grey", Suter Art Gallery, Te Aratoi o Whakatu, Nelson, January - April 2019, New Zealand Collection, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, Auckland (2017-18); A Life Lived Intensely: Alan Pearson Portraiture, New Zealand Portrait Gallery, Wellington (2016); Draw the Line, The Suter Te Aratoi o Whakatu, Nelson (2014); Drawings, Forrester Gallery, Oamaru (2014); Tender is the Night, City Gallery, Wellington (2011); The Captain, Tauranga Art Gallery (2009); Likeness and Character, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki (2007); Sofa 125, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu (2007); Portraits and Personalities, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu (2004); Heaven and Blood: Alan Pearson, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu (1999); Self Portrait Retrospective, Manawatu Public Art Gallery (1995); Visitations, Manawatu Public Art Gallery (1991); Paintings and Drawings: 1980-1985 by Alan Pearson, Dunedin Public Art Gallery (1987); Time Away, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch (1986); Anxious images, Auckland City Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki (1984), Headspace: Portraits from the Dunedin Public Art Gallery Collection, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 2018

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY: Catchpole, Julie; Pearson, Alison; Pearson, Alan. "Master of Grey: Alan Pearson", exhibition catalogue; Art-Tastic. Christchurch Art Gallery, Te Puna o Waiwhetu, 2019; Trussell, Denys. "Grey matter: Alan Pearson at the Suter", Art New Zealand, No. 170, Winter 2019; "Little book of Otautahi Christchurch". Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, 2019; A little book of Black, Christchurch Art Gallery, Te Puna o Waiwhetu, 2017; McEwan, Ann, Treasures of the Waikato, Trust Waikato, Hamilton, 2017; People, places, perspectives: Artworks from the Collection, The Suter Te Aratoi o Whakatu, Nelson, 2016; Trussell, Denys, From the Balcony: Alan Pearson at the Opera, Auckland: Sanderson Contemporary, 2015; Crighton, Anna, English, Colonial, Modern and Maori: The Changing Faces of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand, 1932-2002, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014; Pearson, Alan, A Painter's Poems 1961-2014, Auckland: Alexandra Stewart Press, 2014; Paton, Justin, How to Look at a Painting, Desert Road Productions, 2011 (documentary); Pearson, Alison, Alan Pearson: Expressionist Portraits, Auckland: Alexandra Stewart Press, 2010; The Todd Corporation Art Collection, Wellington: Gran-

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tham House Publishing, 2010; Oil Paintings in Public Ownership in Northumberland, Tees Valley & Tyne and Wear, London: The Public Catalogue Foundation, 2010; Johnstone, Christopher, The Painted Garden in New Zealand Art, Auckland: Godwit, 2008; Trussell, Denys, The Expressive Forest: Essays on the Arts and Ecology in Oceania, Auckland: Brick Row, 2008; Wolfe, Richard, New Zealand Portraits, Auckland: Penguin/Viking, 2008; Eggleton, David, Towards Aotearoa: A Short History of 20th Century New Zealand Art, Auckland: Reed Publishing, 2007; Finlayson, Claire, This Thing in the Mirror: Self Portraits by New Zealand Artists, Nelson: Craig Potton Publishing, 2004; Chesterman, Sandra, Figure Work, Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2002; Heaven and Blood: Painting and Drawing by Alan Pearson 1959-1999, Christchurch: Robert McDougall Art Gallery, 1999; Trussell, Denys, Alan Pearson: His Life and Art, Christchurch: Hazard Press, 1991

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