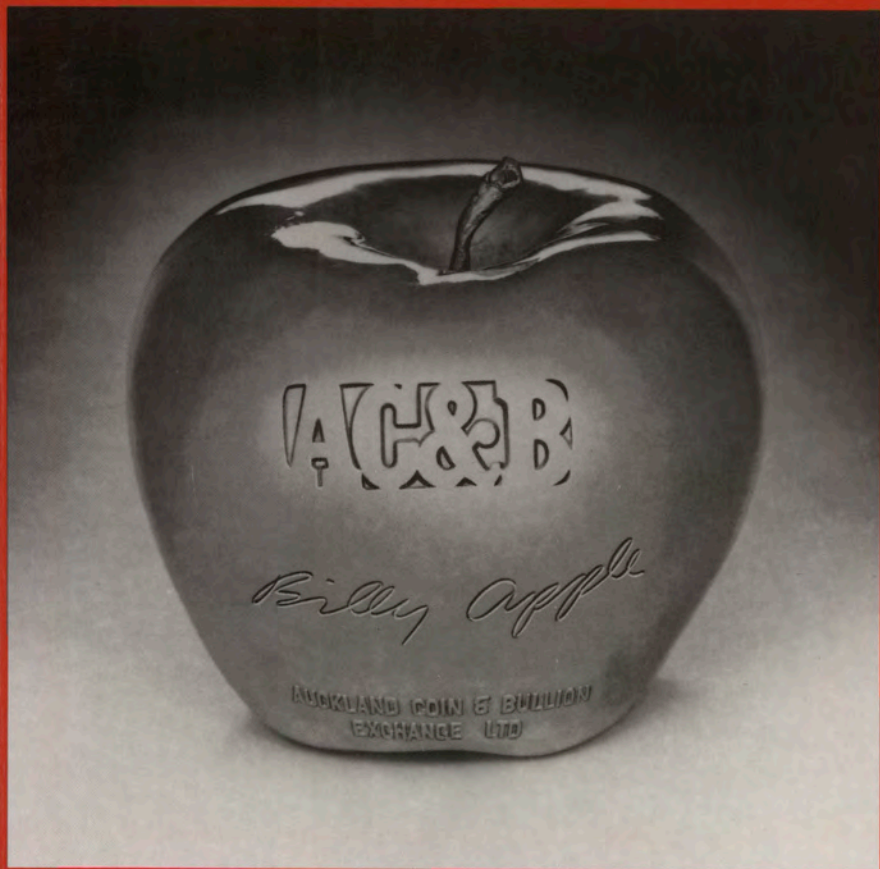




AS GOOD AS GOLD BILLY APPLE

ART TRANSACTIONS, 1981-1991
WELLINGTON CITY ART GALLERY

EDUCATION

AS GOOD AS GOLD

WELLINGTON CITY ART GALLERY

AS GOOD AS GOLD

This catalogue was published on the occasion of the exhibition
As Good As Gold — Billy Apple, Art Transactions 1981-1991 at the
Wellington City Art Gallery 14 September – 10 November
1991.

WELLINGTON CITY ART GALLERY
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AS GOOD AS GOLD BILLY APPLE ART TRANSACTIONS, 1981-1991

WELLINGTON CITY ART GALLERY
Wellington City Council

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FOREWORD

Wellington City Art Gallery is proud to present *As Good As Gold – Billy Apple, Art Transactions, 1981-1991*. Proclaiming Billy Apple's importance in recent New Zealand art history this survey is a milestone in the history of the gallery. The exhibition confronts issues central to current directions in art and testifies to the gallery's commitment to address contemporary art concerns and practice. It is appropriate and timely to focus on Billy Apple's achievements in a project about the interplay between the business of art and the art of business. It concerns money, property, exchange, value. The work comments on and reflects a decade of boom and bust in the investment market.

Billy Apple, one of the most significant figures in New Zealand art is also one of the few New Zealand artists with an international reputation. *As Good As Gold* provides the first full representative survey and appraisal of his work in New Zealand and the first since *From Barrie Bates to Billy Apple 1961-74* at the Serpentine Gallery, London.

Many individuals played a critical role in ensuring the vision for this exhibition and catalogue publication was sustained.

Special acknowledgement is due to guest curator Dr Wistan Curnow who was responsible for selecting the exhibition, compiling the artist's bibliography and exhibition history. His catalogue essay eloquently covers developments in Apple's career and explores issues central to his work. Curnow's close working relationship with the artist since 1975 has provided him with insights into the complexities of Apple's work and made him an ideal choice as curator.

Wellington City Art Gallery is an institution without a collection and relies heavily on the generosity and trust given by private collectors. The gallery gratefully acknowledges the individual and corporate collectors who were prepared to lend their work to the wider public for an extended period.

The exhibition and publication would not have been

possible without the generous financial contribution of Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, Visual Arts Programme and we are very grateful for their advice and endorsement of the project.

Special acknowledgement is due to Jenny and Alan Gibbs for their sponsorship assistance of the catalogue and their support of the project.

The exhibition has been given invaluable assistance and support from the Rutherford Art Trust. Special expertise and assistance has also been provided by Armourguard Security Ltd and Saatchi and Saatchi. We gratefully acknowledge their contribution.

I would like to acknowledge the professional skills of gallery staff. Gregory Burke, Managing Curator has initiated and co-ordinated the project and edited the catalogue. His essay introduces the exhibition and provides a context for its reception. Leon Van den Eijkel, Gallery Designer, collaborated with Billy Apple in the design of the exhibition and catalogue publication. Mary-Louise Browne, Manager Public Programmes, and staff developed a series of forums to take the debate on and around the issues raised in the exhibition into the public domain. Mark Roach, Exhibitions Manager, and his team prepared and installed *As Good As Gold*. Elizabeth O'Loughlin, Administration Manager, and staff provided administrative and secretarial support. We also acknowledge the commitment and continuing support for the Wellington City Art Gallery and its projects by the Wellington City Council.

We would like to express gratitude to Billy Apple not only for the substantial energy and time he has contributed at every level and phase of exhibition development and preparation but also for his confidence in the Wellington City Art Gallery to realise the project. We are all indebted to his major contribution to the visual arts in New Zealand.

Paula Savage
DIRECTOR

EXCHANGE VALUE

THE ARTIST



Poster for Billy Apple tour of New Zealand public galleries, 1975. The image was life-size and intended to be hung at the head height of the artist.

earned him a notoriety in the popular press. But Apple had come back to New Zealand from his base in New York with an international reputation worthy of acclaim. The year before his work had been surveyed by no lesser institution than the Serpentine Gallery, London. The survey covered the period 1960-1974, a period that saw him graduate from the Royal College of Art, change his persona, from Barrie Bates to Billy Apple as an art action, exhibit widely as a Pop and later as a Conceptual artist in both London and New York, as well as work as an art director in the New York advertising world.

From the early 1960s Apple has worked at the forefront of developments in contemporary art. There is no living New

Billy Apple, last seen at the Wellington City Art Gallery as part of the *Now See Hear!* exhibition of 1990, is an artist with a considerable track record and reputation. In New Zealand public awareness of Apple and his work began by and large in the 1970s as a result of a tour of New Zealand public galleries where he executed a number of on-site conceptual art works. Uncompromising in nature, these works, by giving pre-eminence to the artwork as idea, structure and process rather than to the artwork as an object, challenged prevailing attitudes to art at that time and quickly

Zealand artist who could claim a similar history and yet this history has been given little attention in the public record of art in this country. Since 1975 he has continued to make his work unabated with the same finely tuned sensibility that has always characterised his work. His work has not remained static, rather he has extended his ideas and framed new contexts for their reception. This exhibition is the first public survey in New Zealand of the work of Billy Apple. It stands as a significant addition to the Serpentine Gallery's 1974 account of the career of this major New Zealand artist.

THE EXHIBITION

As Good As Gold brings together for the first time a comprehensive selection of Apple's work completed over the last ten years. Here we see the collected paintings of the *From The Collection Series*. These works, labels of a sort writ large, provide a snapshot of private and corporate art-collecting in New Zealand. There are works here from major New Zealand collections and works by collectors who have a particular commitment to Apple. These paintings work as symbols of affirmation of both Apple and the collector. The exhibition also brings together those works that in various ways are documents of the processes of exchange. We have paintings such as *Sold* and *Auctioned* where the work is both a literal and symbolic receipt of sale. Paintings such as *AC/DC*, *1/2 Price* and *NFS* claim the conditions of sale as their only content whereas with the paintings from the *Bartered* series the art acts as and is a currency, a token of value. Finally included in the exhibition are paintings from the *Golden Rectangle* series that offer a more layered meditation on the processes of exchange and the transaction of value. By splitting one work into seven based on the ratio of the golden section Apple locates the meaning of the work not in the object itself but in the relationship of its parts and in the possibility and irrationality of future negotiations.

THE TIME

By framing as the content of his painting the commodity status of art and in more general terms the conditions by which things are traded and thereby valued in today's market-lead economy Apple is an artist of his time. Much of the work in this exhibition was produced during the 1980s, a decade of major shifts in the nature of art production and consumption. It was a decade of unprecedented growth and transformation of the art market and museum profession. Contemporary art in particular shifted its status as being the somewhat marginal pursuit of enthusiasts to that of a symbol of economic buoyancy. Art investment funds began, corporate collections became commonplace, new professions such as art consultancy emerged, the trade in art paraphernalia such as T-shirts, badges, postcards was invigorated and artists became professional businessmen and women. The strength of the art market had much to do with contemporary art becoming public as it never was. It was promoted as a good investment, akin to but not the equivalent of stocks and bonds, for art also enhances the image of that to which it is attached. Contemporary art was and is marketed as the ultimate designer commodity in an era where products such as clothes, cars and video recorders are promoted not for their functional value but for their prestige value.

However, while the shift of the art world into the mainstream economy provides an important context for understanding Apple's work, his own relationship to the art market remains uncompromising. Although he may advertise *Art For Sale* he has no range of product for ready delivery. In many ways what is offered for sale are the very terms of sale.

THE GALLERY

The foregrounding of the place of the market in contemporary art has affected irrevocably the status of those agencies that have a hand in determining art's value. No longer can the



Tales of Gold, 1990, artist's billboard. Commissioned by the Wellington City Art Gallery in association with the exhibition *Now See Hear! Art, Language and Translation*.

critic, the curator, the educator and indeed the public gallery itself easily claim neutrality. All are implicated in the market and to an extent are dependent on it.

In particular public galleries, of which the Wellington City Art Gallery is a good example, depend increasingly on the financial support of the private and corporate sector. However, while the poster and signage to an exhibition may proffer a sponsor's logo, public galleries usually draw the line at the start of the exhibition space. Within this space the artwork remains symbolically unsullied by the business of art.

This exhibition, through the transgression implied by such public endorsement of corporate and private collections within the exhibition space, calls into account the relationship to the market of this gallery in particular and of public galleries in general.

THE GUEST CURATOR

The exhibition has been selected by guest curator Dr Wystan Curnow, a critic, poet and associate professor of English literature at the University of Auckland. Wystan Curnow knows the work of Billy Apple well, he has written about it since 1975. Although Curnow has written on many artist's work his relationship to Apple is a special case, for since 1979 he has been a collaborator in the production of the work. One effect of their collaboration is to blur the usual distinction between artist and critic. On one level their relationship may be easily described as like that of copy-writer to art director, Curnow checks or writes the texts for Apple's design. His texts are one further example of the incorporation of a service into a trademark that is Billy Apple. But Curnow himself is a leading intellectual and critic and his acknowledgement by Apple completely outweighs that given to other contributors such as the typesetter or signwriter. At times in the work the name Curnow as a credit approaches the scale of the name Apple. His then is also a name to trade with, a name that adds weight to the work as art.

That Curnow's contribution may be more than straightforward is seen most clearly in works where he provides a story such as in the work *Tales of Gold (Atalanta)*. The text is a Curnow rewrite of a Graves translation of the myth of Atalanta. In cementing the story to a surface that is broken into parts according to the principle of the golden section, Apple and Curnow speculate on the role of language in regulating value. The story itself serves to provide a mythological dimension to the work *The Golden Apple* and by extension to Apple's entire project. Further the text suggests a chain of psychic links between inheritance, appearance, desire, athletic performance, sex and gold. Apple may well argue that the words remain on the surface of the work and as such are incidental to his intentions. The fact is that they provide much of what is intriguing about the work in the tension they provoke between

surface and depth, between materiality and the psychological factors involved in the attribution and transaction of value.

Within Apple's oeuvre Curnow is cast in many roles, as copy-writer, as critic and also as collector. For included in this exhibition is the work *From the Wystan Curnow Collection*. In this series the collector commissions the work and their name and identity is its focus. They are in effect both insider and outsider, subject and object. For Curnow's own painting this dichotomy is complicated by his role as advisor and collaborator. Apple adds further irony to this contradiction by providing a text on the origin of Curnow's christian name 'Wystan' written by his father the poet Allen Curnow. This text is not credited to the father and in fact is written in the third person as if by another. Maybe this irony is a tactic employed to make both obvious and problematic what is set up in this series of works and this work in particular — questions concerning the definition, purchase and possession of self. Yet despite the incommensurability of Curnow's role and maybe in part because of it, his take on Apple's work is particularly informed. Maybe Apple's project of implication entices the critic to speak from the inside.

THE TEAM

Billy Apple is not the producer of his work, but rather he has a production team. As a copy-writer Curnow is one member of a team that includes the signwriter, the typesetter, and the canvas preparator, all experts in their field. Each member of the team plays a key role in the art transaction, a fact that is not incidental but central to the content of the work. Apple has also another team. These are the people he works with to restore, prepare and race his collection of historic racing cars and classic racing motorcycles. At times a member of one team will crossover as with Ken Osborne of *Metal Protection Ltd* who prepared the surfaces of the paintings on gold passivated steel. Through the exhibition of a 1960 AJS motorcycle Apple

wilfully merges the business of art with the business of motorsport. The bike with the facts of its sponsorship is included in the exhibition as a work, an art transaction titled *Privately Sponsored*. The sponsorship of the bike also involves its participation in classic motorcycle races in New Zealand. Here the art component of *Team Apple* has to measure up on the racetrack.



Half-page advertisement in *Art New Zealand* 37, 1985, p5.

At times corporate identity becomes inseparable from its relationship to a sporting event or team, referenced in this exhibition by the inclusion of the work *From the Fay, Richwhite Collection*. By using the Kevlar sail of the racing yacht KZ7 as the canvas for the work Apple reminds us of a relationship that is seen as a fixed condition in the public imagination. Not simply a sponsor *Fay, Richwhite* has become an indispensable member of the team challenging for the America's Cup and conversely the athletes, designers and systems analysts of the America's Cup Challenge have joined the team that is *Fay, Richwhite*. Through his painting Apple further profiles the *Fay, Richwhite Art Collection* as significant to its corporate identity and thereby links it to his own project. High performance racing machines, fast yachts, sports teams, banks, corporations and ultimately the artist himself are all linked by Apple and thereby implicated in his work. By association each adds value to the other. The inter-relationships speak of the exchange of value and the value of exchange.

Issues of performance are central to sporting culture and performance is a term also used to describe the relative activity of people, machines, shares and ultimately companies in the business world. The image of performance is in itself valuable and makes an association with sporting performance attractive to corporate sponsors.

THE COLLECTOR

It is the collector who is finally the focus of Apple's transaction. It is after all the buyers of art, be they private or public, who determine the economy of art. For Apple though the collector is all important, for without the collector much of the work would in fact not exist. This is clear with the commissioned works of the *From the Collection* series where the transaction is negotiated before the painting is realised. It is also true for the paintings that are made before a buyer is found. If the result of Apple's work is to reveal the value of the transaction then a painting lies dormant until the transaction has been legitimised and its face value established.

In this sense the collector is essential to the final act of the production of the work. But the collector has a continuing role. If the terms of purchase of an Apple painting is its focus, its meaning also relies on the context of its given collection and on the context of its reception. It depends on a work moving between states. In this sense meaning is fluid. For example works in the *Exchanged* series depend on the two partners working together to allow occasions for the work to become whole. This network of co-operation is enlarged with the possible seven collectors of any given work in the *Golden Rectangle* series. With the *From the Collection* series the works gain and provide meaning to and from the works within the given collection. This fact can only be fully appreciated when a work is viewed in the context of that collection. However the collectors themselves form another team, a private co-operative that only fully manifests itself through public exhibition of the series of works. If the collector then invests in Apple through the transaction Apple also invests in the collector and draws him or her into his wider project.

THE STANDARD

Apple's work offers us a set of standards and is about standards. These are not necessarily standards determined by him. Rather

APPLE TURNS TO GOLD

"The Golden Apple," a trans-actonal art work by Billy Apple
Auckland Coin & Bullion Exchange Limited
60 Parnell Road, Auckland, New Zealand
5-10 September, 1983. Monday to Friday
9am to 5pm, Saturday 9am to 3pm
Preview: Monday 5 September, 5.30 to 7pm

A4 announcement for the exhibition
The Golden Apple, Auckland Coin and
Bullion Exchange Limited, 1983.

tics and in terms of the nature of the transaction itself.

Apple consistently uses what he considers the best signwriter available to paint the text onto his works, he composes his works according to standards such as the ratio of the golden section or according to the A system used in paper sizing. For his typeface he uses *Futura*, favoured by many top graphic designers for the setting of titles, a typeface also often used by American artist Barbara Kruger in her text paintings. The terms by which he does business too are standardised and made clear. He will often use the ratio of the golden section to determine not only the price of each work by size but also the commission won by his dealer. With the *Exchanged* series the exchange is based on size for size. On a more homely note in *Bartered: Two Years of Enjoyment* he bartered the painting for what he considers to be the best coffee available in Auckland, itself a standard. His interest in classic racing machines is focussed on standards of performance and

they are culturally determined, standards by which we live, pressed into the service of Apple's project. It is through setting standards that we measure, order and give meaning to the world. Most standards are specific and stable and therefore easily understood. This is not always true for the arts. The factors that determine standards in the arts are camouflaged to many. Billy Apple however makes his standards clear. At every step in the making of his paintings Apple works to highly specific standards in terms of technical production, in terms of aesthe-

and design. All these standards have to measure up against the question begged by this exhibition's title *As Good As Gold*. With *The Golden Apple* the standards referenced in Apple's work are merged with gold itself. Gold is the ultimate standard. It has a history, it has an aura and it has substance. Ashes may return to ashes but gold will always be gold. Standards by their nature are subject to contest. It is through the process of deflation or inflation that standards are destabilised. In the modern era at least, art standards have been particularly contested. For Apple we may well take issue with the standards he deploys, but we can't deny them.

THE TRANSACTION

The result of Apple's work is clear. His aim – to unpack and disclose the business of the transaction. In many ways his practice bears a correspondence to that of a number of contemporary artists who, in different ways, mirror the processes and systems of commerce, in order to intervene critically within them. Yet Apple's work does not readily offer up a critique. One can even assume that he enjoys the business of the exchange. He is after all happy to barter a painting for a car or two years supply of coffee. As with artists such as Barbara Kruger, Apple has continued his conceptual strategy of working on occasion outside the conventional venues for the reception of art. Like Kruger he has produced billboards and public signs, effectively incorporating 'ad space' into the realm of his address. But whereas Kruger intends to interrupt this space, call it to account, Apple uses it for what it's worth. Apple's billboard works then are more like advertising than Kruger's, and yet in another way they are more like art. Kruger, like the advertisers she mimics, uses the photographic multiple, a medium ideally suited to message proliferation. An Apple billboard is however a one off, an original executed to exacting standards, which in effect mimics the singularity of the art object.

The term repositioning is one used by advertisers to describe the process of redefining the identity of a product and thereby its status within the market place. Repositioning is a tactic used by many artists working today. Jeff Koons and Haim Steinbach for example reposition the consumer object as art object in order to comment on the construction of desire. Apple repositions the receipt of sale as art object. The receipt however has no prior existence but depends on the transaction it records which in turn depends on the singularity of the receipt as an art object. While the transaction is the focus of the painting, its meaning hovers between repositioning Apple's relationship to the art market, publicising his business and laying bare art's current complicity with the processes of commodification.

Gregory Burke.

BARTERED



Billy Apple
11 May, 1989

Bartered, 1989, serigraph print on paper, with two black and white photographs, 760mm x 560mm. Collection of Gordon and Lynne Hall, Auckland. Photograph: Jack Inwood.

AS GOOD AS GOLD

ART FOR SALE

As Good As Gold is an exhibition of paintings. Billy Apple has been a painter for the last ten years. Before that, for ten years, he produced work which usually only survived the occasion of its making or exhibition as documentation. Why the change? Certainly, it was not nostalgia for the smell of an oily rag, or for the joys of dabbing and daubing. It is the case that a lot of young painterly painters arrived on the art scene around 1980, and kick-started the international art market back to life. Apple wasn't remotely interested in the young painters, he was interested in the market. The alternative art scene in New York, which had supported his installation and performance work, had changed, run out of steam. New Zealand, where he had begun to exhibit in 1975, had still developed no alternative spaces. A resurgent art market offered access to a wider audience, and an income.

Having distanced himself from it for so long, any decision to return to the marketplace could not be innocently taken, it would somehow have to enter into the work. So the choice of medium came to be determined by that decision, by specifically the idea of making art for sale which would document the transaction of which it was itself the object. All the works in *As Good As Gold* are to that extent documents, and many look just like them. Each painting was conceived in relation to that idea of the transaction: how would it extend, or complicate it? At the start, new work developed around the first painting, *Sold* (1981), each bearing the name of the particular type of transaction concerned, but later around kinds of transaction which could be repeated without merely duplicating themselves. *As Good As Gold* is an idea show first, an exhibition of paintings second.

An idea show. Do not get me wrong. For all its intelligence and refinement, *As Good As Gold* is made up of art which looks

straightforward and is straightforward. Art of surfaces, not of depths.

Viewers should find themselves, therefore, on familiar ground, and it will be this, the bright stain of the mundane which, if anything, disconcerts. These reminders of cheques signed, accounts rendered, prices ticketed, offers made, applications filled out. Deals. Deposits. Declarations. They hardly make for an art which, like a vacation, offers a retreat from all that. Here is an artist who has, it appears, to live like everybody else.¹

He exchanges his art for a car, for a regular supply of coffee, for assistance with the making of his works, for cash to pay the bills. Certainly, there's some romance, of a hearty kind, in the exhibition's reminder of the saga of KZ-7 and the America's Cup of 1987, of the thrills of TT racing on the Isle of Man. And, for sure, an aesthetics attached to these racing machines. The institutions and the figures of high finance and big business: names to conjure with. None is distinct from its signage, however; from the advertising billboard, the company logo, the LED sign. The spread of signs across buildings, down streets, across screens, into the home, onto our clothing . . . if it's not got words on it, it's an endangered species. This is our world and Billy Apple's art is a part of it. An art finding its meanings, not by drawing them from some secret hoard of its own but by scanning an already public text.

Before he left for London, Apple worked in the advertising art department of the Farmers' Trading Company in Auckland, where he designed, in 1957, what was until quite recently, its familiar logo. At the Royal College of Art, he was enrolled in the School of Design, although he hung out with the painters mostly. When he first moved to New York, in 1964, he worked on Madison Avenue. From time to time since then he has in fact returned to advertising work, most recently as Senior Art

1. This sentence, 'The artist has to live like everybody else', was contributed by Billy Apple and myself to a programme, *Artists in Lights*, for the Mid-City lightboard, as part of ANZART-in-Auckland, 1985.



Our price \$265,000, 1983. Mural painted on Marshall's Treads Ltd building, Teed Street, Newmarket by Terry Maitland. This work was commissioned by Marshall's Treads in response to a Newmarket Borough Council offer of \$170,000. The building was later sold, but not to the Council. Photograph: Jack Inwood.

Director and Vice President of Lois, Pitts, Gershon, Pon in New York. Roy Lichtenstein, it is to be recalled, was a draughtsman for an office furniture company, James Rosenquist a billboard painter, and Andy Warhol, who once said, 'I started as a commercial artist and I want to finish as a business artist', a highly paid illustrator for I. Miller. It is clear that, for Apple and these artists, their experience in the commercial art world helped shape their sensibilities as Pop artists in the world of the fine arts.

About the business of art, *As Good As Gold* is also art about business. Its documentation of the processes of exchange of art works is exemplary, it tracks the circulation of goods and the fate of value as such in a capitalist culture. Apple's art is one which, by never getting above itself in the world in which it must make its way, de-mystifies art while simultaneously holding the world to account.

A BULL MARKET

While art is more clearly valued today, it is unclear whether it is valued for aesthetic or monetary reasons . . . Not only have artists benefited from the decade's financial boom, but the art reflects this newer, closer relation between art and commerce.

Mary Jane Jacobs, 'Art in the Age of Reagan', *A Forest of Signs*, MoCA, Los Angeles, 1989.

Media policy in New Zealand seems to be that the most interesting, and certainly the most intelligible thing about art is the money in it. Hence the *New Zealand Herald* headline to its item on the opening of the Paul Klee exhibition at the Auckland City Art Gallery in 1983: '\$17m art raises a laugh'. Hence the TV campaign for that Gallery's record-breaking 1984 Monet show, with its focus upon the security arrangements, presenting the delivery of the paintings as though it were a military exercise. Hence the Vidal Wines double-page spread in the November 1985 *Auckland Metro*, 'A Very Private Collection', featuring a dinner-suited burglar making off with five bottles of the wine in question from Mrs Blair-Logie's cellar, past the gilt-framed waterlilies on the wall, saying, 'As for the Monet — it could wait. It wasn't a good year anyway'. The only time art features on our international news is when some expensive examples of it get stolen or when a record sum is spent on some.

The eighties, the years of *As Good As Gold*, were one long bull market for art. From the Whitney Museum's purchase of Jasper John's *Three Flags* (1958), in 1980, for \$US1m, to the sale of his *False Start* (1959) in late 1989 for \$US17.05m, it was a decade of record-breaking prices, especially for contemporary art. Although tiny by comparison, the New Zealand market followed a similar, if shorter curve. Media and public interest grew; in the mid-eighties in particular, there was a steady stream of articles on the art business in magazines like *North and South*, *Auckland Metro*, *National Business Review* and *The Listener*. Collectors, consultants, dealers, auctioneers, blue chip artists



Art For Sale, at Peter Webb Galleries, Auckland, 1981; installation view. Photograph: Gillian Chaplin.

— all were featured. In 1984, the highest price paid at auction for a New Zealand work of art was \$50,000, although only a year before on the open market Billy Apple's *The Golden Apple* had sold for \$85,000. The most successful auction in 1984 did \$500,000 worth of business in one night. Two years later Frances Hodgkins and Colin McCahon were fetching over \$100,000 and auctions had hit the \$1m mark. This was news. In 1981 you could buy an Apple canvas, 7' x 5', for \$3,000; in 1985 a work on paper, 40" x 27" cost you more than that. Then, in the middle years, 1985-1987, some artists' prices doubled year by year. Since then they've barely moved. Four Wellington dealers have just gone out of business, all in a matter of weeks; overseas, auction prices, especially for contemporary art have been down for six months.

Art is a measure of value in our society. To call something art which is not, such as a piece of jewellery ('body art'), or furniture ('art-iture'), or clothing ('wearable art') is to elevate

to another plane where it may be judged by some higher criteria. What those criteria are is not always clear, perhaps the naming is all. Money too, is a measure of value, and of the value of art, among other things. The headline, '\$17m art raises a laugh' cites and caters to a common scepticism about the exchange rate, which derives from arts intangible use and its shifting not to say obscure meanings. If the media are to be believed, many people are secretly delighted to learn of million dollar art heists, and scandalised by the multi-million dollar prices some art commands, especially the contemporary variety. So, when on the occasion of its unveiling in Auckland this year, British sculptor Richard Deacon's *Nobody Here But Us* was referred to as 'the \$1.3 million sculpture', as though that was its real name, it was difficult to tell whether its owners were declaring their confidence in the exchange value of the work, or merely catering to the expected vicarious interest. Art may be a measure, but it remains an uncertain one. As a title, *As Good As Gold*, may be said to beg (playfully) the very same question. Certainly, Apple's art provokes and confronts the contradictions in our culture's view of the relation between art and money. Each work may be thought of as an attempt to stabilise that relation. Because it is never just for sale, but proposes a relationship which commits both parties to make something of the transaction, because you can never buy just an Apple but must buy *into* his system, each work appears intent upon locating the exchange value of art *per se*, seeking its endorsement by the market and a re-statement of its authority.

A POP CONCEPTUALIST

Of 'Young Contemporaries 1961', the Times critic wrote: 'It is noticeable that abstraction, and particularly the improvised, American-style abstraction, is 'out', and that a new manner, sharply flavoured with the signs, slogans and mordant humour of metropolitan life, and emanating mostly from the Royal College of Art, is 'in'.'

Alan Bowness, 'Some Recent History', London: The New Scene, Walker Art Centre 1965.

Young Contemporaries 1962

RBA Galleries, Suffolk Street, London SW1. Weekdays 10 to 5.30; Sundays 2 to 6.
From Wednesday, February 7, until Saturday, February 24.

Name _____

Title of Work _____

Price £ _____

School _____

Young Contemporaries 1962, 1961, off-set lithograph on canvas, 20" x 30".
Printed by Roy Crossett.

Billy Apple began his career in London as one of a group of rising young Pop artists fresh out of the Royal College of Art. Along with David Hockney, R J Kitaj, Peter Phillips and Derek Boshier, his work was first seen in the influential 'Young Contemporaries' exhibitions of 1960-62. British-style Pop art emerges as a coalescing of the work of these artists with that of the more established Peter Blake, and members of the Independent Group, notably Eduardo Paolozzi and Richard Hamilton. Apple's contribution to the genesis of British Pop is seldom documented, largely because histories tend to confine themselves to those artists who stayed on or returned to the British scene; he left for New York in 1964.²

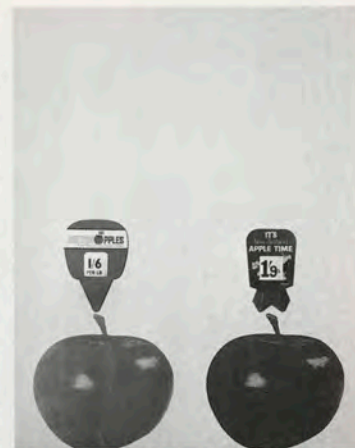
Apple's British contemporaries were painters, whereas he produced sculptures, photographs, films, as well as canvases;

2. Uwe M Schneede notes that 'In about 1963/64 the phase of searching by the 3rd Pop art generation had come to an end . . . During this period several of the English Pop artists went to America . . . ' *Pop Art in England. Beginnings of a new Figuration 1947-1963*, Kunstverein Hamburg, 1976, p.18.

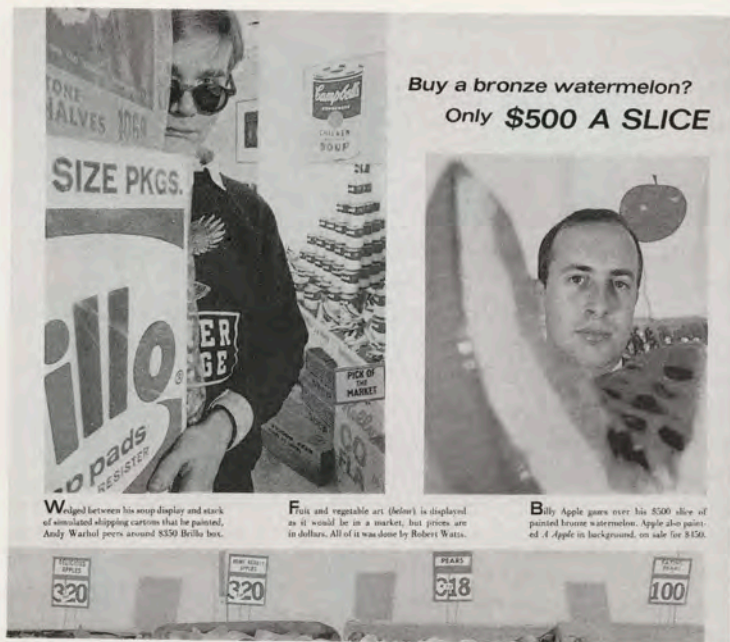
the strikingly conceptual character of his work, stemming from an intimacy with advertising and communications theory, also set him apart. For him their work had about it too much art by half.

In 1962 Barrie Bates assumed the name of Billy Apple. With the help of Lady Clairol Instant Cream Whip he began his new life as a blonde, and as a commodity. His first solo show, the following year at London's Gallery One, *Apple Sees Red*, included besides some self-portraits, a cast bronze Granny Smith *Top Brass* with several actual such Smiths, and a canvas featuring a New Zealand and a British Apple. These combinations of art and artist, the real and the simulacrum, nature and culture, surround this launching of a new product, a new name, with ironies.

In 1969, he established *Apple*, one of the first alternative galleries in New York, and was later director of 112 Greene Street Workshop. These spaces, which for a time were as important as the commercial galleries, supported non-commercial work, temporary installations and performances, and activities in which the concept or process took precedence over the object or end product. Apple's own conceptual work, which he presented at The Clocktower, 112 Greene Street, The Fine Arts Building, as well as in his own gallery, was increasingly concerned with making changes to the exhibition



Red/Green Apples for Sale, 1962, off-set lithograph on canvas, 50" x 40". First exhibited in *Apple Sees Red*, at Gallery One, London, 1963. This work was later modified for exhibition in the United States and retitled *Apples, 2 for 25¢*, and shown as such in *The American Supermarket* exhibition at the Bianchini Gallery, New York, 1964.



Illustrations from the *Life* magazine feature, 'Art or Not, its food for thought', by Calvin Tomkins, on the Bianchini Gallery's Pop art show, *The American Supermarket*, in its issue for November 20, 1964.

spaces themselves. He would clean, paint, alter and even move the walls, floors or ceilings. In 1975, and in 1979-80, he carried out a large number of works of this kind, in private and public galleries throughout New Zealand. The changes he made, many of them permanent, constituted a thorough-going investigation of our exhibition spaces which revealed the extent to which they structured expectations of whatever was presented in them. Between 1977 and 1980, a similar critique was applied to two leading New York dealer spaces, the Leo Castelli Gallery and the Charles Cowles Gallery, at 420 West Broadway. Because these changes involved interfering with property not his own, they required delicate and often difficult

negotiation. In effect the artist was laying claim to the gallery as his art object, one which would subsequently become irrevocably and seamlessly woven into the fabric of the circumstances of viewing in these spaces.³

As *Good As Gold* brings together Apple's earlier pop conflating of artist, artwork and commodity, with this later conceptualist conflation of art object and gallery space, of contained with its container. For Apple, the change from sculpture to painting represented a shift in attention, from the conditions the gallery offered for exhibition, to the conditions the work itself offered for exchange, from the gallery as frame, or sculptural support, to the gallery as commercial outlet.

The relation of today's art to consumer society is perhaps even more complicated than that of the Pop artists. The subject now is not a product pulled from a grocery shelf, but art itself as a product for sale. Appropriating techniques of commerce and advertising for the content, mode of fabrication, and presentation of the work, artists are playing with the strategies of both the business and the art worlds that have combined forces in so many ways over the past decade. As a result their work stands somewhere between criticality and complacency.

Mary Jane Jacobs, 'Art in the Age of Reagan: 1980-88', *A Forest of Signs*, 1989.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE ARTIST

As a sculptor or painter, Billy Apple has never done his own work, even as a student at the Royal College of Art. Although the practice has now become commonplace in some sections of the art world, Apple is one of the very few starting out in the 1960s of whom this could be said.⁴ Pop art began in good part as a reaction against Abstract Expressionism, a kind of painting

3. For documentation, see: *From Barry Bates to Billy Apple*, Serpentine Gallery, London, 1974; *Alternatives In Retrospect*, An Historical Overview, 1969-1975, New Museum, New York, 1981; Wystan Curnow, 'Billy Apple in New Zealand!' *Auckland City Art Gallery Bulletin* 61, 1976.

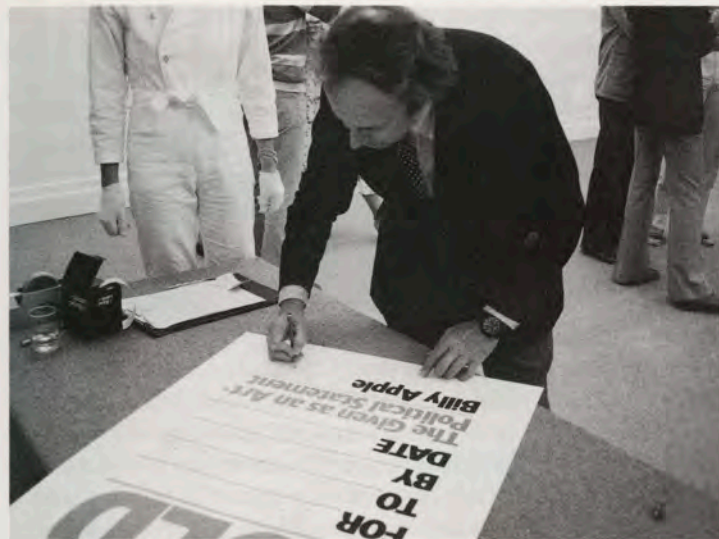
4. Although from early in his career Andy Warhol made use of assistants, he later retracted his 1972 claim that 'Brigid (Polk) has been doing my paintings for the last three years'.

in which the individual touch and gesture of the artist served as a signature of the self. From that perspective, Billy Apple's name change, and his unwillingness to fabricate his own work, must be regarded as clear measures of his reaction to that notion of the artist.

For the making of the works in this exhibition, Apple has gathered around himself a number of people whose skill in their particular craft he greatly admires and on which, over a long period, he has come to rely. Here are the credits. Ian Bergquist, whose association goes back to 1975, stretches the canvases. He uses Turnbuckle stretchers manufactured in Auckland by *Practical Studio*. He also prepares the canvases – usually with two coats of white acrylic sealer undercoat and then two or three of the required acrylic colour. The last of these is always sprayed on. The 'art work' for the lettering is prepared from the artist's layout sketch as computer-generated typesetting. Alvin Pankhurst, and Robert Thomson of *Artspec*, are two highly skilled professionals in the Auckland advertising world who have worked on the texts for Apple's posters and paintings over many years. Like Bergquist, Pankhurst is also an artist; Robert Thomson a fine arts graduate of the Glasgow School of Art.

The lettering, transferred to a film positive from a bromide print is 'camera ready' when it is passed on to the sign writer, Terry Maitland, who uses an overhead projector to throw the image of the text onto the prepared canvas so that he can draw it up for hand painting. Except for the two *AC/DC* works which were painted in New York, all the lettering in the exhibition is the handiwork of this one man. The works on gold passivated steel have involved the collaboration of Ken Osborne of *Metal Protection Limited*.

All these people set themselves the highest of standards and enjoy the challenges to their abilities and temperament posed by Apple's art. Nothing is too much trouble, even if it is. *From a Private Collection*, for instance, is painted in two tones of



Billy Apple signing one of ten prints of *Sold*, at Peter Webb Galleries, 1981. Photograph: Gillian Chaplin.

grey, with the lettering the darker of the two. These tones were not arbitrarily chosen. Working with Robert Thomson, the artist got a printout of a grey that was 61.8% black, and a grey 38.2% black, a ratio of the golden section. These were then matched with a paint chart to Resene's Ship Grey and Resene's Jumbo Grey.

My own role requires some mention, because I too have contributed to the works in *As Good As Gold*. I have known Billy Apple and his work since the mid-1960's, but it was not till 1979 that I assumed my present role as advising critic and sometime contributing copywriter.⁵ The title, *From the Collection*, which was first used in a page-work in *Art New Zealand* in 1981 entitled *From the Gellert Family Collection*, arose from a particularly intense discussion between the two of us. To say that the words came into my head first is not to lay any special claim to them – the

5. See: Wystan Curnow, 'Working with Billy Apple', *Splash* 3, May 1985, for a fuller account.

work, the subject under discussion was after all Apple's, not mine – so much as to indicate something of the character of a working relationship of this kind.

Every single work in this exhibition was discussed with me in detail before and after its production. Typically, these conversations have been concerned with the relation of new work to previous work, and to the developing shape of the transactions project as a whole. Much of the time I listen; then I comment, and ask questions. In that I also choose, as now, to comment publicly on the work, my role, unlike that of the other members of the production team, is a peculiarly compromised and compromising one. Furthermore, not only am I writing here about what is, in some measure, my own work as though it were completely that of another, but I am also discussing an exhibition which includes a work from my own collection. It was a gift to me, in acknowledgement of my contributions. In thus confessing my self-interest, I must here disclaim all objectivity. My integrity shattered, I must nevertheless carry on. I am going to account for my corruption and complicity as an effect, a quite characteristic effect, of the work. It won't get me off the hook, rather it will leave me hanging there with all the other parties to Apple's transactions. For the artist, in so far as he removes himself from the centre of the work, draws us all relentlessly into its web.

'The reader', wrote Roland Barthes, in his famous essay, 'The Death of the Author', 'is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination.' In *As Good As Gold*, only the handwriting and the signatures on *Sold*, *Auctioned*, *Bartered*, *Collard's Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot*, *The Golden Apple* and *Commissioned* are of the artist's own making, and even the signature, as I have noted, is not his birth name. Mr. A-is-for-Apple, if you please. It's legal, but an assumed, not a given, name. And it is a play on beginnings, on origins, on learning to read. The Fall, as you might think, into language, into knowledge. So that the self is a word. A name,

a brand name. And it was many years before he was able to sign his new name; in the meantime, his wife Jacki signed his art, even his cheques.

The painting, then, begins and ends, not with its maker, but with its receiver. There can be no doubt about *these* names: Julie and Leon Marshall, Tony Petrie, Jenny and Alan Gibbs. Not one of the works which bears these names was made on spec; they came into existence because these people commissioned them. In abandoning the scene of the work's production, Billy Apple empties his painting of the usual content: the message, the expression, the narrative, the image – all gone. In that regard, his painting has nothing to communicate. The artist abandons his space so as to set the scene for the viewer's or, more particularly, the possessor's arrival. By siting the work in the context of its reception, he fills it with another content: that of the structures and the conventions of that context and the parties who engage with them on the occasion of a specific transaction. And it is here that the signature retains its relevance. No longer a sign of 'personal creativity', of some unique individuality, the signature installs the artist as a legal identity, a guarantor of the currency of his own work.

AS GOOD AS GOLD

The exhibition is divided into three sections: *Transactions*, *From the Collection*, and *The Golden Rectangle*. Each represents a still growing group of works. *Privately Sponsored* was transacted expressly for the exhibition, and *From a Private Collection* was commissioned a few months ago. However, the first of the groups was the one which developed first, and *The Golden Rectangle* is the most recent. *As Good As Gold* traces the progression of an idea, from its clear, if bald, enunciation, in a work like *Sold*, to its maturity in the alluring allusiveness and subtlety of a work like *Division of the Golden Rectangle* of 1988.

TRANSACTIONS

The series began in 1980. His dealer at the time, Peter Webb, who quite properly was eager to lure Apple to market, proposed a limited edition print. *Numbered and Signed* took that commission as its given, offering for sale the artist's signature and the number of the print.⁶ Some month's later, a commission from Collard Brothers' Vineyard for a label design for their Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot suggested the idea of the vintage as edition: the artist asked that the number of bottles released correspond to the year, and proceeded to number and sign each one. Any hesitation he might have had about embracing the market — he had donated 50% of his profit for *Numbered and Signed*'s 25 copies to the Art History Department at the University of Auckland — was not in evidence at his first exhibition of transactional works. *Art For Sale* it was called. Comprising *Sold*, the canvas, and ten works-on-paper, it was a sell-out what is more. Because all the works were bills of sale, they were incomplete until filled out with the details of their transaction. As a consequence, Peter Webb was unable to open his gallery and let the public in until he had sold the show out.

In New Zealand, a small round red sticker affixed to the wall next to a work of art in a dealer gallery signifies that it's been sold, a half-round or a blue sticker, that someone has got a hold on it.⁷ It is usual to find a pricelist on the wall, or on some piece of furniture, a list which sometimes includes *NFS*, or Not For Sale, next to one or two titles. Not all dealers display such information, indeed in the major art centres they usually keep it to themselves and to their offices. Apple's transaction works shift this information from such margins of discretion straight into the halogen glare of the gallery spotlights. *Sold* obliges the dealer and the buyers to make a spectacle of their business.

NFS opposes the brutal claims of *Sold* with an equally

6. Ironically, because most of the surface is taken up with the artist's handwriting, *Numbered And Signed* is more a set of unique works on paper than a limited edition print.

7. Apple used the red sticker in a page-work, titled *Sold*, in *Art New Zealand* 18, 1981.

I.O.U.

AMOUNT _____
ON DEMAND
DATE _____

IOU (untransacted), acrylic on canvas, 30" × 21". The painting was done in 1987, the work's completion entails its 'filling out' in red. Three *IOU* works on paper (A3 size) have been made, one of which has been transacted; it is in the collection of the Reverend Ian Browne of Melbourne.

definitive assertion. Large and sharply turned out in black and white, this painting declares in black and white: this is one Apple that can't be bought. It refuses the transaction. Its very reason for being rests on that refusal. *NFS* is a sure sign, we say, that this artist has an investment in this project which is other than mercenary. *NFS* is a work the artist cannot bring himself to part with. Why is this, *what* is this? We really want to know, and we're prepared to pay for it. In its display of reserve, *NFS* has something in common with the modest, soberly attired, *From a Private Collection*, and *Privately Sponsored*, both transacted by people who evidently prefer to mind their own business.

Exchanged, like *Bartered* involves an alternative to cash purchase, but the transaction is fraternal. Many artists exchange works. Robert Ellis is an old friend of the artist. The work he has exchanged is unusual for him, much more like an Apple work in fact. You can understand why Apple might have had his eyes on it. Ellis did not, however, get to choose an Apple work pleasing to his eye, because there are none available for exchange. So, in a gesture to even the exchange out, Apple produces a work which is identical in size, medium and colour to the one he has been given. This transaction can be repeated; each diptych which results will be as different as are the works of the different artists with whom the exchange has occurred. *Exchanged*, because it only becomes one when paired up with its companion and because that is only likely to happen when both are borrowed for an exhibition such as this, is peculiarly dependent and parasitic upon its companion.

Initially the objective has been to produce a group of works which documented all the ways in which, following its production, a work of art conventionally changed hands. Besides *Sold*, *NFS*, *Bartered*, *Auctioned*, and *Exchanged*, there was *Gifted*. Then it seemed there might be other ways in which the painting might document a condition of receivership and a destiny as property. *AC/DC* documents the financial relationship between artist and dealer. *1/2 Price*, *IOU*, and *Complimentary* are in documentary form,

but they concern transactions or arrangements in which art works do not ordinarily play a part. *1/2 Price* places its owner in the position of a bargain-hunter, *Complimentary* of someone who (somehow) has got something for nothing. But of the three *IOU*, which has yet to be transacted, is probably the most compelling; standing between the closure of *Sold* and *NFS*, it offers a deal which is disconcertingly inconclusive.

FROM THE COLLECTION

The collector of art consumes not only the art but the artist too, in a way. He acquires the fruits of the artist's moral instability from a safe distance, without having to assume the artist's politically inferior position. The collector thinks the artist represents his innermost self, his unrealised or deferred self, and when he acquires the art object he rewards himself for his superior socialisation. The collector thinks he has the best of both worlds — he buys back the part of himself he has lost, so to speak. The artist recognises himself to exist only when he is recognised by the collector, and the collector recognises himself only when he recognises the artist.

Allan McCollum, interview with DA Robbins, cited by Dan Cameron in *Art And Its Double*, A New York Perspective, Fundacion Caja De Pensiones, Madrid, 1987.

The universe of the collector is a metaphorical one. By surrounding himself with art-objects, he recreates meaning, a world connected to multiple exterior references, to diverse realities. The collector who is able to recognise and arrange works of art so that they become meaningful is himself acting as author/director. Like the artists in whom he invests personally and financially, the collector too may be creative and productive.

Chantel Pontbriand, 'Editorial Collections: Visions Of The Future', in *Parachute* 54, 1989.

Whoever purchases a Billy Apple and becomes a party to one of his transactions, confesses a special interest in and desire for his work, and declares themselves a player in the art world. She or he says: I bought it. I swapped it. I exchanged it. I'm putting my money and my mark on an Apple and taking the consequences. I own it. Their ownership lacks the usual anonymity, a fact which becomes all too apparent whenever the works

FROM THE GELLERT FAMILY COLLECTION

The Given as an Art- Political Statement Billy Apple

This page purchased by The Gellert Family Collection

From the Gellert Family Collection, 1980, pagework published in *Art New Zealand* 17, p.5. This is the first work in the series, *From the Collection*.

Like *Bartered*, *From the Collection* is a transaction whose content grows with repetition. As the collection of *From the Collection* increases so too does the network of associations each of them comes to carry. Each provides a portrait of its owner, firstly because beside the name it bears some mark of identity, whether it is a colour, a motif or the material from which it is made. *From the Julie and Leon Marshall Collection* is painted on rubber because Mr Marshall is in the tyre business, *From the Fay, Richwhite Collection* is on kevlar, or in fact a piece of KZ-7 sail, because Michael Fay is a yachting visionary. *From the Tony Petrie Collection* marks him as a collector of military memorabilia as well as art. Secondly, while *From the Collection* implies a condition of removal, permission granted for the reproduction or public exhibition of a work, the collector's name on the work so attaches it to them and to the rest of their collection that it seems to name it, speak for it. It draws around itself whatever works by other artists the collector happens to own, as the banner under which they march.

leave the context of private ownership or, as is the case with many of the works in this exhibition, enter for the first time, the context of public display. As *Good As Gold* could not take place without the generosity of private collectors of his work, who evidently place an importance on it which transcends the boundaries of their own possession of it. Many of Apple's collectors own more than one work of his; they collect art, but more importantly for us they collect Apple's art.

Like *Bartered*, *From the Collection* is a transaction whose content grows with repetition. As the collection of *From the*



A portion of the AT and JB Gibbs collection, showing *From the Jenny and Alan Gibbs Collection*, 1988, in their home in Auckland. Photograph: Patrick Reynolds.

Among them it claims a unique and privileged relation to its owner.

Assembled here, as a group within the exhibition's selection from the artist's work of the last ten years, they amount to a collection of collectors. Inevitably, a sample. What kind of collective portrait do they offer, what company does each keep? Who's there, who's not? What does the exhibition as a whole, indicate about art collecting in New Zealand? Why doesn't *As Good As Gold* include work from the permanent collection of a public art gallery? Because, apart from works on paper, there are none to be found in such collections. And why is that? It is not as though Apple had no interest in their business, on the contrary, his picture of the art system remains incomplete without the participation of such institutions.

To own or display one of these works is to be drawn into the web of its implications, for example which manifests itself at this juncture, as a collective comprising of couples, corporations, children, shopkeepers, poets, and financiers among others. What kind of fifth column is this? What weight can be given to their common collaboration in this artist's project?

THE AURA OF ART

Apple's paintings are no less works of art for his not painting them himself. Nor are they less identifiably his, because the corporate look is clear. In their mimicry of the paper work and signage of commercial life, they may seem to both lower themselves below, and elevate their models above, the threshold between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic, art and non-art. Like Roy Lichtenstein, with his enlargements and revisions of comic-strip frames, Apple fine tunes the mundane, supercharges the banal. He endows the document with a visual authority surplus to requirements. But, and this is the point, Apple's transactions have requirements of their own; for example, to convince as objects of desire, they must look good. Constrained as they are to work with their contextual givens, they must find beauty in an apotheosis of the typographic function.

The particular refinement of these paintings reflects Apple's use of mechanical and electronic reproductive techniques. Because painted from 'camera-ready flat art', as it is called, his works look startlingly legible in reproduction – an effect enhanced by his preference for those modernist typefaces, *Gill* and *Futura*, both in *Extra Bold Condensed*. Their relation to photographic reproduction is in fact ambivalent; for while they originate in those processes which make possible the mass production and distribution of signs, at a certain point they opt out, reverting to a technologically primitive existence as the unique, hand-made product of high art. Walter Benjamin's well-known proposition is relevant: 'Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its

presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. . . . that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art.'⁸ That is to say, the ambivalence results in a typical irony; for while the transactional character of Apple's art defends aura, the aesthetic qualities which bait the hook of the transaction have their immediate origins in methods of reproduction which in the long run serve to undermine it.

THE GOLDEN RECTANGLE

AC/DC is short for *Artist's Cut/Dealer's Cut*. It plays on the relationship between artist and dealer, on its professional intimacy, ascribing to it a certain 'polymorphous perversity'. *AC/DC* also initiates the use of the golden section in Apple's work. This classical procedure which involves cutting a square out of a rectangle so as to leave another rectangle the same proportion as the original, provides both the composition of the work and the division of the proceeds of sale. It sets aside the usual arrangement: at the time 33 1/3 % was, by tacit agreement, the dealer's cut in New Zealand, as it was 50% in New York. The local cut now stands at 40%. It was replaced by a unit of the ratio of the golden section: 38.2% over 61.8%. Depending on where and when the work was put up for sale the ratio would result in a loss for either the artist or the dealer. *AC/DC* found its subject, its composition, and its colour in its documentation of the context of sale.

In the five Golden Rectangle works, pricing again occasions the introduction of the golden section as composition, colour and text. Each of the seven portions may be purchased separately at a price determined by its relation to the whole. This procedure raises questions not only about price – why do small works cost less than large works, at least when they first come up for sale? Are the issues of quality and scale inseparable? But also about

8 Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', *Illuminations*, Schocken Books, New York, 1969, pp. 222-23.

the separateness and integrity of an individual purchase, and the unity of the work. Each division of the golden rectangle is readily envisaged as a unit of a larger whole, and divisible into smaller units. We saw how Apple's unwillingness to fabricate his own work prevented identification of the work's unity with its origin, here his willingness to break the work up for sale inhibits us from identifying its unity with its destination. Neither author nor reader can claim mastery of these works. Those which did not go to a single buyer, depend on exhibitions like this to rediscover their integrity which is temporary at best.

THE GOLDEN APPLE

When *The Golden Apple* was bought, its buyer was quoted as saying that 'Billy Apple at one stage envisaged making a group of four and it would be tremendous if this could be done. I can't afford to do it but perhaps individual buyers could be found for the other three. Then at some stage the four could be brought together in a pile and exhibited'.⁹

The Golden Apple is the perfect logo for this show. It has the form whose name the artist took for his own at the outset of his career. It bears the stamp of Auckland Coin and Bullion Ltd, which went into receivership in July of 1988. Its Managing Director was subsequently arrested and in May this year acquitted on all criminal charges. This object is thus a survivor and a glowing memento of the boom and bust culture of the 1980s. As substance, as 103.599 ounces of pure gold, it embodies great value, quite apart from that which may be attributed to it as a work of art. It completes the triad of money, art and bullion whose incommensurability and inherent instability as signs for and materialisations of value *As Good As Gold* so thoroughly explores.

Wystan Curnow

9. *The Christchurch Star* 7/9/83.

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION ILLUSTRATED

SOLD

FOR \$3000 —

TO Future Group.

BY Peter Webb Galleries

DATE 26th. April 1981

**The Given as an Art-
Political Statement**

Billy Apple *Billy Apple*

Sold, 1981

AUCTIONED

FOR \$ 3,000

TO Future Group

BY Peter Webb Galleries

DATE 24th July 1985

Billy Apple

Auctioned, 1985

N.F.S.

COMMISSIONED

BY DAVID BARTLETT

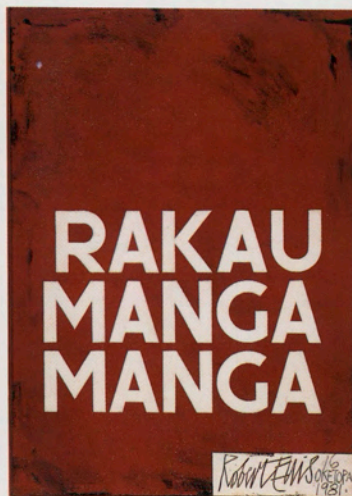
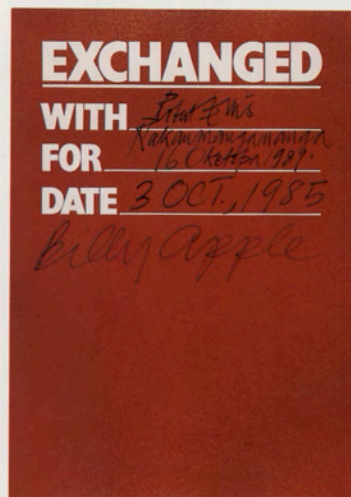
FOR \$3,000

DATE MAY 28, 1987

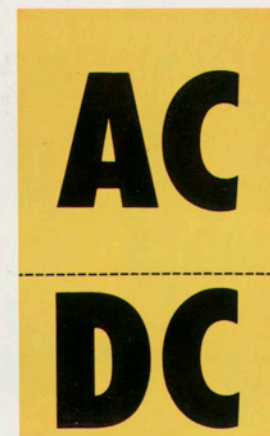
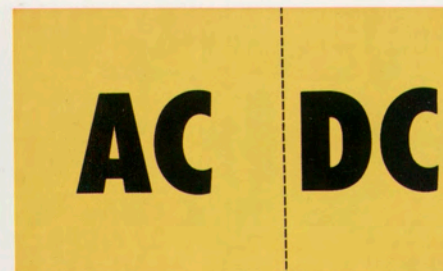
Billy Apple

NFS, 1987

Commissioned, 1987



Exchanged (with Robert Ellis: Rakaumangamanga, 1981), 1985



AC/DC, 1986
AC/DC, 1986



Collard Brothers, Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot, 1/1981 and 1981/1981, 1983

BARTERED

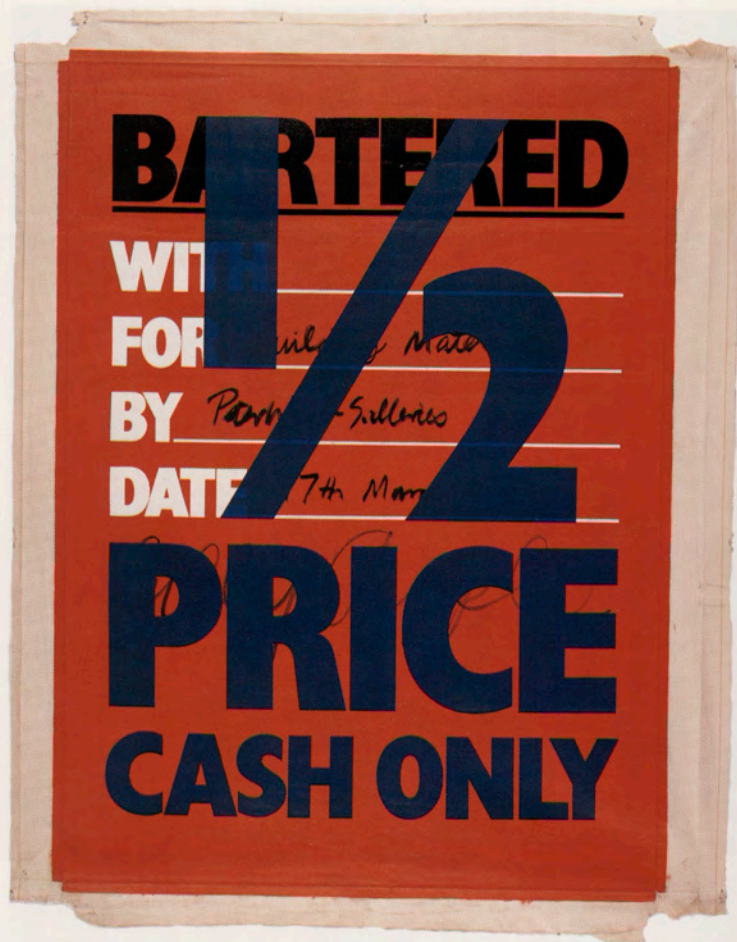
WITH Noelbert

FOR two years of enjoyment

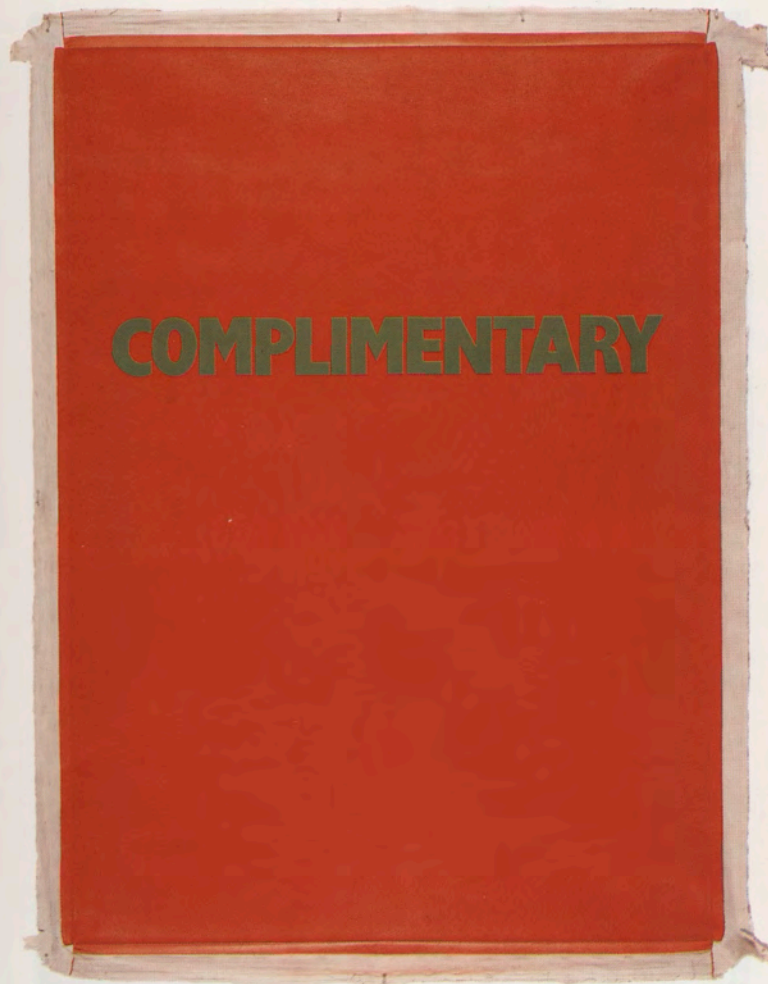
BY Billy Apple

DATE 29 July, 1989

Bartered, 1989



1/2 Price, 1984-90



Complimentary, 1990

BARTERED

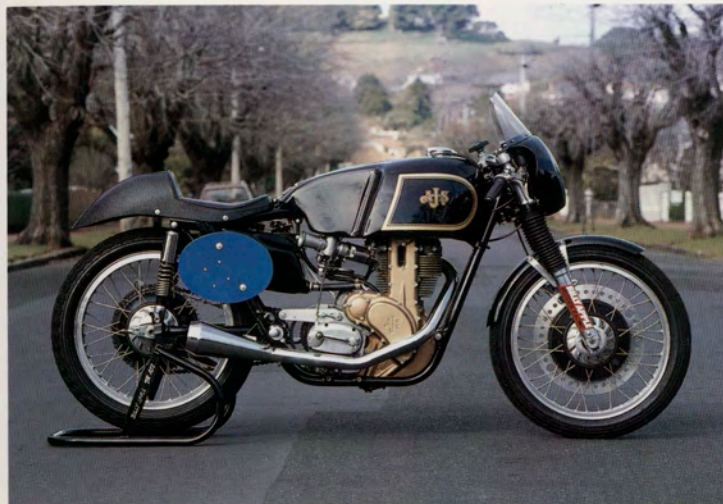
WITH Chantwell Collection

FOR Accounts Paid

BY Sue Crockford Gallery

DATE 3 May, 1991

Billy Apple



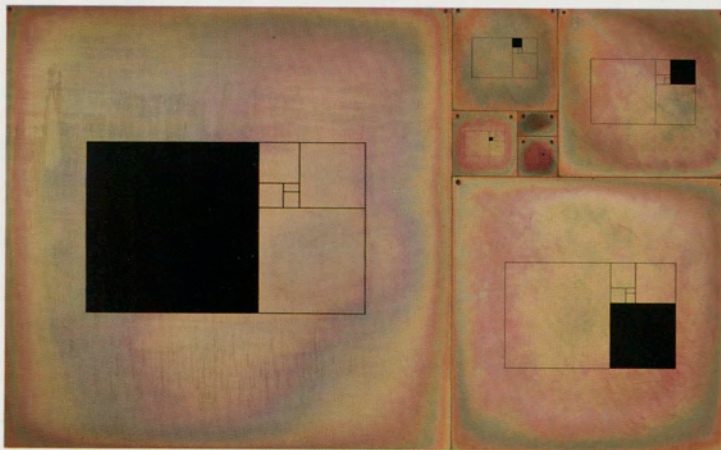
PRIVATELY SPONSORED

AS GOOD AS GOLD, Wellington City Art Gallery
14 September – 10 November, 1991

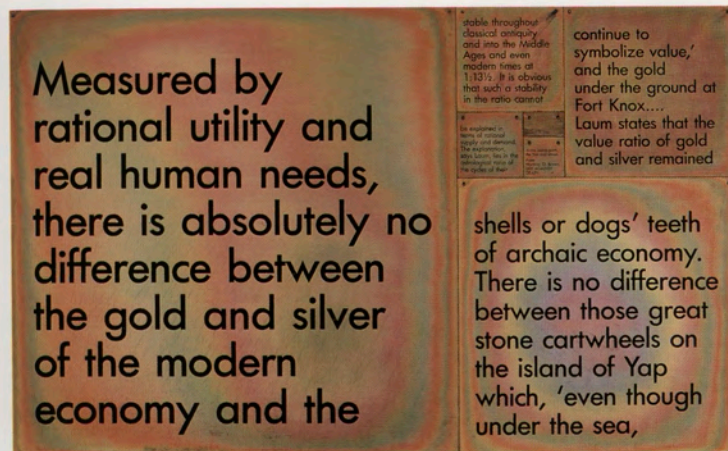
CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE RACING, Pukekohe Circuit
15/16 February, 1992

Bartered, 1988-91

Privately Sponsored, 1991



The Divine Proportion, 1988, (1)



Measured by
rational utility and
real human needs,
there is absolutely no
difference between
the gold and silver
of the modern
economy and the

stable throughout
classical antiquity
and into the Middle
Ages and even
modern times at
1:137. It is obvious
that such a stability
in the ratio cannot

continue to
symbolize value,
and the gold
under the ground at
Fort Knox....
Laum states that the
value ratio of gold
and silver remained

shells or dogs' teeth
of archaic economy.
There is no difference
between those great
stone cartwheels on
the island of Yap
which, 'even though
under the sea,

Tales of Gold (Gold Standard), 1988

Atalanta's birth was a real blow to Iasus. Girls don't make heirs. So distraught was he one night he took off with his baby to the top of the Parthenian Hill, not far from Calydon, and totally abandoned her there. And she'd have died for sure were it not for Artemis who caused a big mother bear to find the child, suckle it and keep it warm. Later some hunters chanced upon her and she

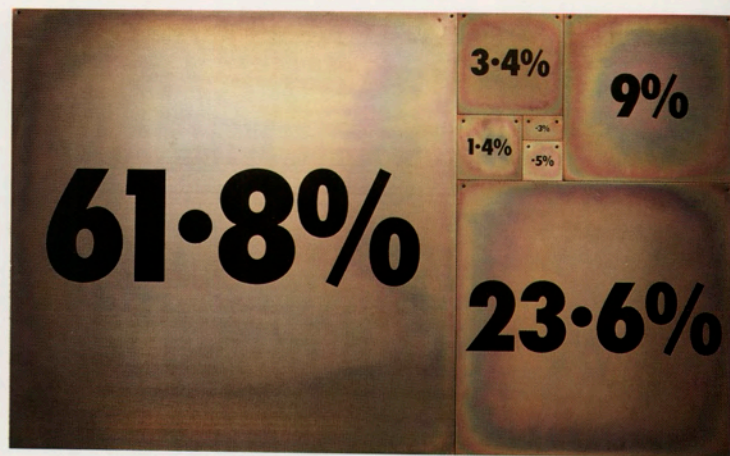
Atalanta's husband would have drawn her into a hundred marriages. The first to marry her had married her and left her with her strength. When Iasus had four months old she was the first in the land, married the noble Periclytus. He then told her that out of the four sons, Iasus had a share with a piece with the strength to go further than the others.

became one of them. She learnt to hunt with the best. As a young woman Atalanta was never without a weapon. She was beautiful and a virgin. She killed centaurs.

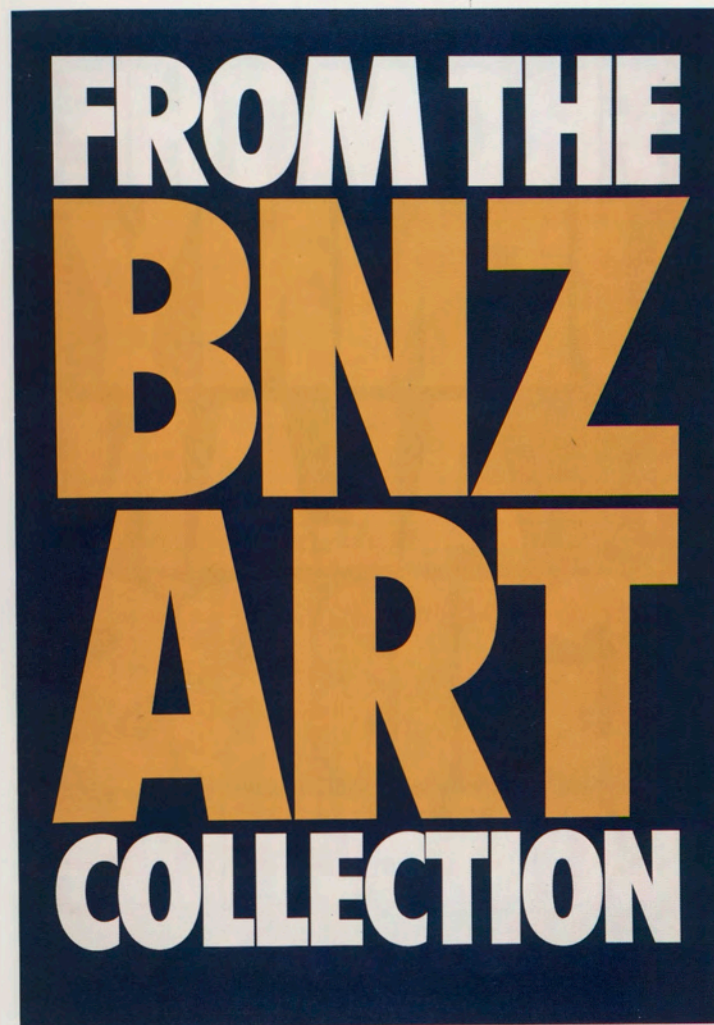
Cross with Oeneus, Artemis caused a boar to run amuck on his property, killing cows and frightening farm hands. Oeneus sent word to hunters everywhere, offering cash prizes, and Atalanta it was who

draw the first blood. She was showered with praise, and Iasus at last designed to acknowledge her as his daughter. She was, he said, to come home to the palace where she belonged and — this was the first thing he said when they got inside the door — get married. Well, Atalanta did not want this. The Delphic Oracle had warned against it for one thing. Anyway she did a deal with Iasus: all

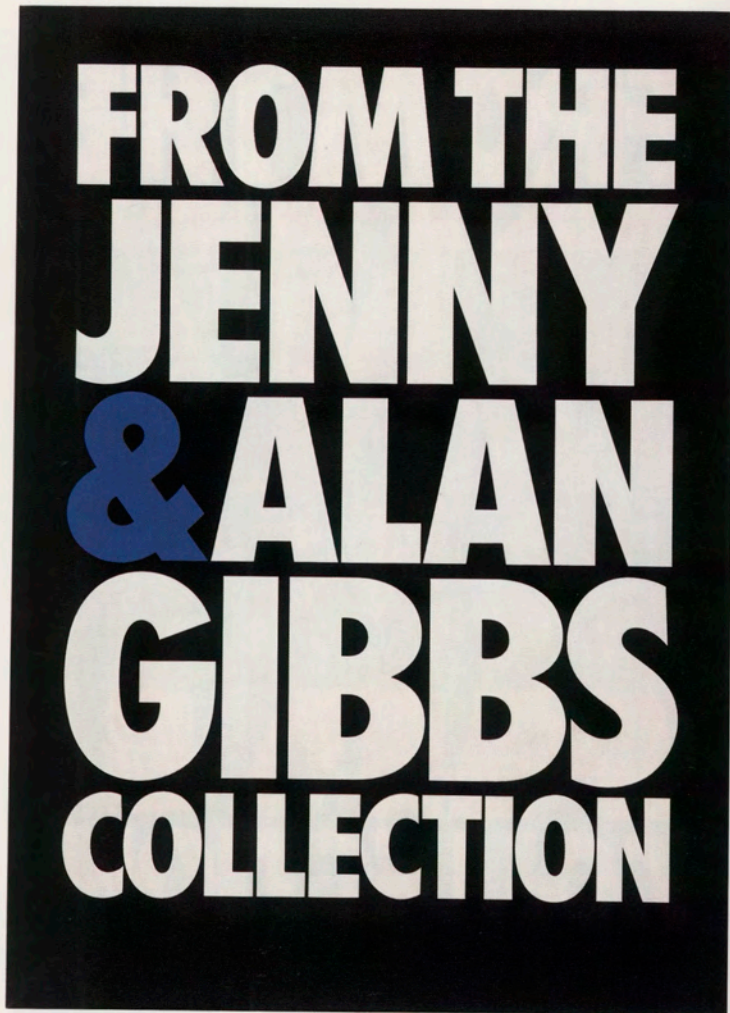
DIVISION OF THE GOLDEN RECTANGLE (the divine proportion)



The Divine Proportion, 1988, (5)



From the BNZ Art Collection, 1988



From the Jenny and Alan Gibbs Collection, 1988



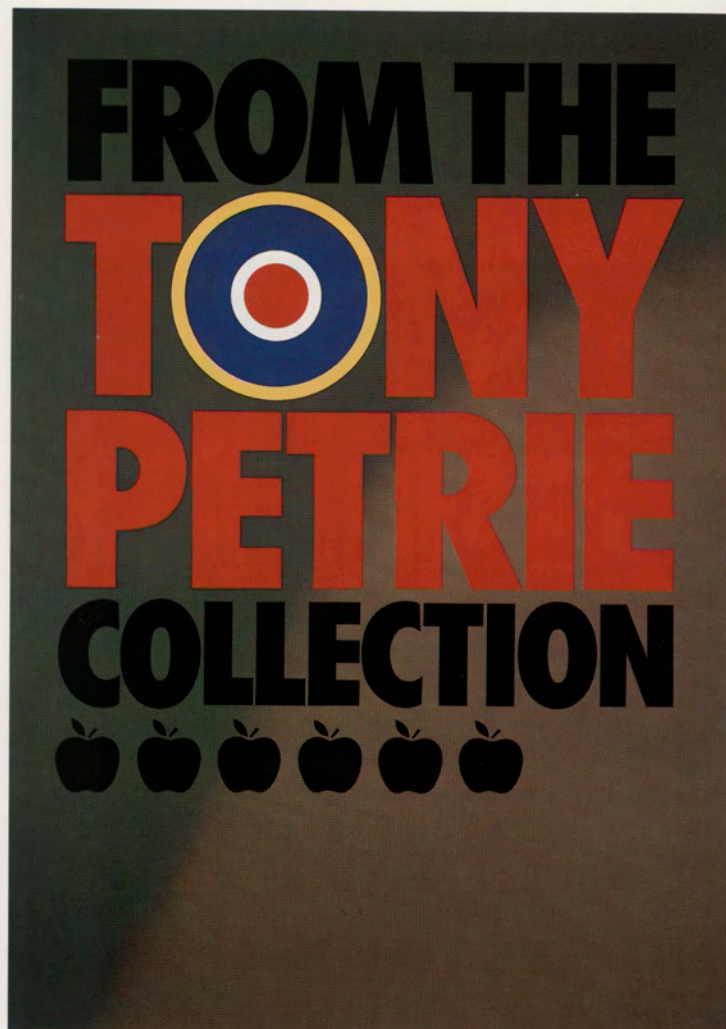
From the Thor Bergquist Collection, 1988



From the Artspec Collection, 1989



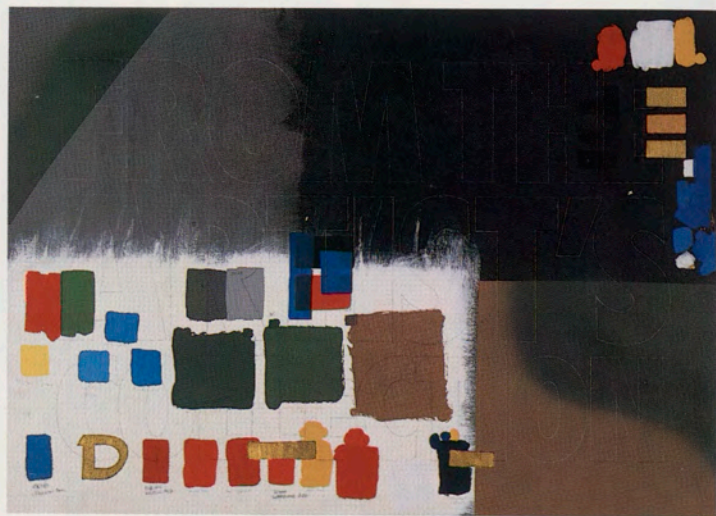
From the Hunter Collection, 1989



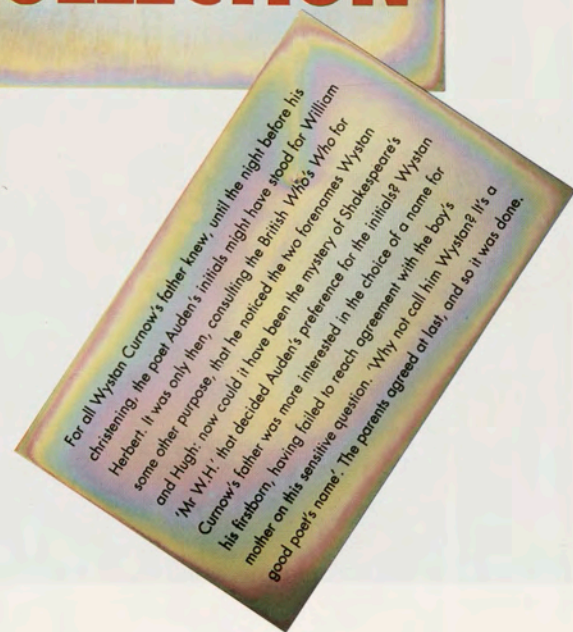
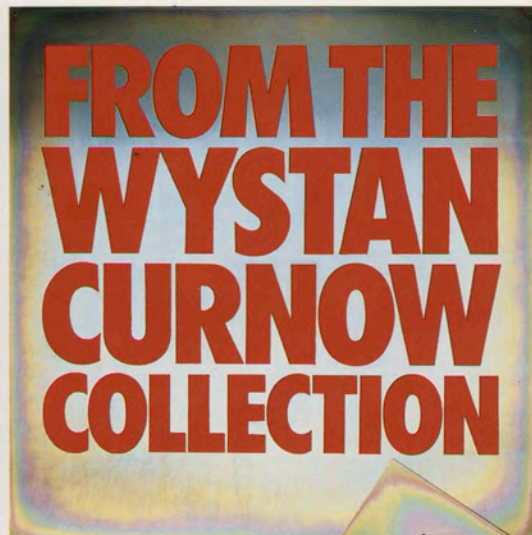
From the Tony Petrie Collection, 1989



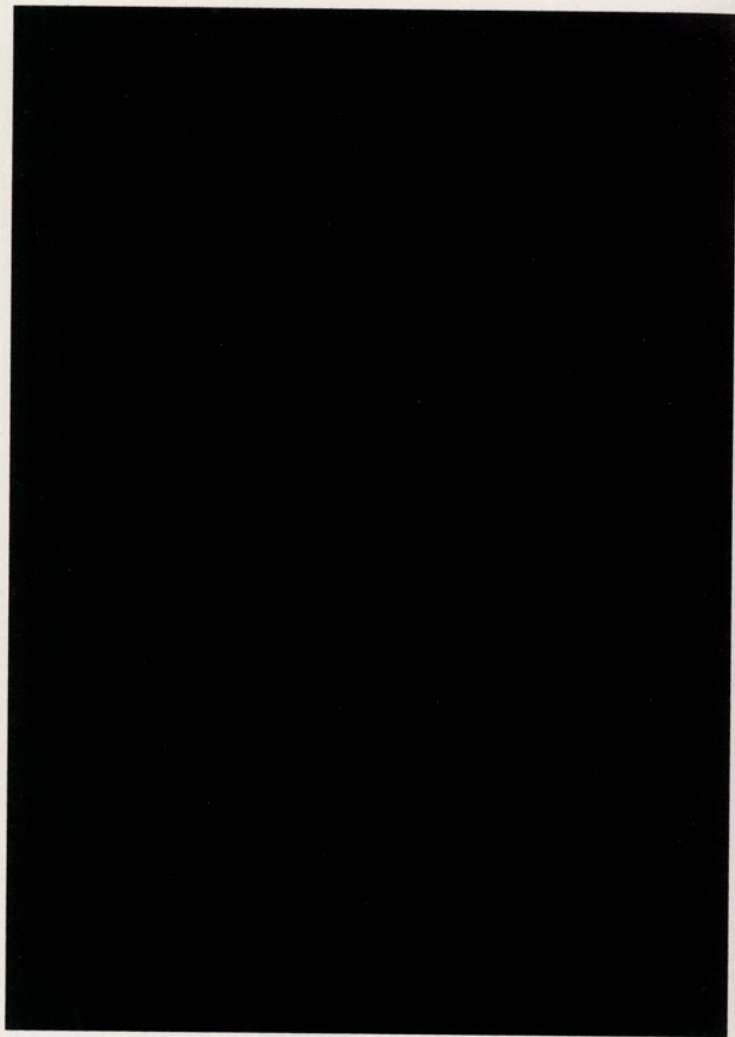
From the Fay, Richwhite Collection, 1991



From the Artist's Collection, 1991



From the Wystan Curnow Collection, 1991



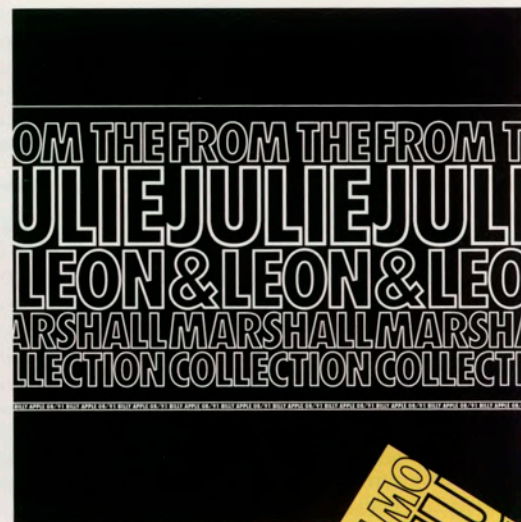
From the David Bartlett Collection, 1991

**FROM A
PRIVATE
COLLECTION**

From a Private Collection, 1991



From the Kitty and Warwick Brown Collection; From the WM and KS Brown Collection, 1991



Study for: From the Julie & Leon Marshall Collection, 1991

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

TRANSACTIONS SERIES

Paintings

All works are acrylic on canvas unless otherwise stated.

1. *Sold*, 1981
84" x 60"
Collection, The Future Group
On loan to Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui
2. *Exchanged (with Robert Ellis: Rakaumangamanga, 1981)*, 1985
Diptych each 40" x 28 1/4"
Collections, Robert Ellis and the artist
3. *Auctioned*, 1985
Serigraph on chromolux board
39 1/4" x 27 1/4"
Collection of The Future Group
On loan to Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui
4. *AC/DC*, 1986
13" x 8"
Courtesy, Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland
5. *AC/DC*, 1986
8" x 13"
Courtesy, Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland
6. *NFS*, 1987
60" x 84"
Collection of the artist
On loan to the National Art Gallery, Wellington
7. *Commissioned*, 1987
30" x 21"
Collection of David Bartlett
8. *Bartered*, 1989
Photocopy, collage, pencil on paper
297mm x 210mm (A4)
Collection of Ciro Coffee
9. *1/2 Price*, 1984-90
86" x 62" (painted area)
Chartwell Collection, Hamilton
On loan to Waikato Museum of Art and History
10. *Complimentary*, 1990
86" x 62" (painted area)

Chartwell Collection, Hamilton
On loan to Waikato Museum of Art and History

11. *Bartered*, 1988-91
84" x 60"
Chartwell Collection, Hamilton
On loan to Waikato Museum of Art and History

Sculpture

12. *The Golden Apple*, 1983
22 carat gold, 0.999 degrees of purity
103.599 oz
Private Collection, Auckland
13. *Collard Brothers, Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot, 1/1981 and 1981/1981*, 1983
Limited edition wine, 2 bottles
153mm x 88mm (label)
Collection of Collard Brothers, Ltd
14. *Privately Sponsored*, 1991
1960 AJS 7R 350cc. Classic British racing motorcycle
105mm x 148mm (A6 adhesive label)
The motorcycle is owned by Billy Apple

THE GOLDEN RECTANGLE SERIES

All works are enamel on passivated steel, and consist of seven pieces, and measure 618mm x 1000mm. 1 and 5 are painted; 2, 3 and 4 are serigraphed.

1. *The Divine Proportion*, 1988
Collection Fay, Richwhite and Co, Ltd
2. *Tales of Gold (Gold Standard)*, 1988
Courtesy, Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland
3. *Tales of Gold (Atalanta)*, 1988
The seven pieces are owned by the following:
(61.8%) The artist (1.4%) Julie and Leon Marshall
(23.6%) The Hunter Collection (.5%) The Hunter Collection
(9%) Julie and Leon Marshall (.3%) SJC Fletcher
(3.4%) Julie and Leon Marshall
4. *Division of the Golden Rectangle*, 1988
The seven pieces are owned by the following:
(61.8%) The artist (1.4%) GR and CM Jenner
(23.6%) Paul Hartigan (.5%) Hilary and Bryan Skinner
(9%) WM and KS Brown (.3%) The Hunter Collection
(3.4%) The Hunter Collection
5. *The Divine Proportion*, 1988
Collection of AT and JB Gibbs

FROM THE COLLECTION

All works are acrylic on canvas unless otherwise stated.

1. *From the BNZ Art Collection, 1988*
60" × 42"
2. *From the Jenny and Alan Gibbs Collection, 1988*
42" × 30"
3. *From the Thor Bergquist Collection, 1988*
42" × 30"
4. *From the Artspec Collection, 1989*
30" × 42"
5. *From the Hunter Collection, 1989*
21" × 30"
6. *From the Tony Petrie Collection, 1989*
30" × 21"
7. *From the David Bartlett Collection, 1991*
Acrylic and polyurethane on canvas
30" × 21"
8. *From a Private Collection, 1991*
5¼" × 7½"
9. *From the Fay, Richwhite Collection, 1991*
Enamel on kevlar
45½" × 98½"
10. *From the Artist's Collection, 1991*
Enamel, acrylic, gold leaf and pencil on canvas
30" × 42"
11. *From the Kitty and Warwick Brown Collection*
From the WM and KS Brown Collection, 1991
30" × 42"
12. *From the Wystan Curnow Collection, 1991*
Enamel painted and serigraphed on gold passivated steel
Dyptich, 618mm × 618mm, 618mm × 382mm
13. *From the Julie and Leon Marshall Collection, 1991*
Black rubber, brass sheet
Dyptich, 1000mm × 1000mm, 1000mm × 618mm

A Note on Measurements

Dimensions are described according to the measuring system used by the artist. All paintings on canvas are measured in inches, their dimensions are divisions of those of *Sold*. All paintings on metal are measured in millimetres and correspond to the ratio of the golden section. Auctioned excepted, works on paper follow the A system of paper sizing.

DOCUMENTATION

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 1963 *Apple Sees Red, Live Stills*, Gallery One, London.
Motion Picture Meets The Apple, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London.
- 1965 *Apples To Xerox*, Bianchini Gallery, New York.
Neon Rainbows, Bianchini Gallery, New York.
- 1966 *Billy Apple In Idaho*, 359 A Street, Idaho Falls.
Neons, Pepsi Cola Gallery, New York.
- 1967 *U.F.O.s*, Howard Wise Gallery, New York.
- 1969 *Spotlights* (collaboration with Preston McClanahan), Libra Studios, New York.
 (Note: Between 1969 and 1974 Apple's work consisted largely of temporary installations and performances. Many took place at *Apple* 161 West 23rd Street in New York. As its name suggests, this alternative space gallery was run by the artist. Works at *Apple* by him included a series of 13 installations between October 1969 and April 1970, and 10 installation/activities between October 1971 and March 1972. Fuller documentation of the work of this period is included in the catalogue for *From Barrie Bates To Billy Apple*, 1974.)
- 1970 *Neon Accumulation*, The Electric Gallery, Toronto.
Glass Transformation (with Anna Lockwood), Zeez Arts Gallery, London.
- 1971 *Window Cleaning*, 112 Greene Street Gallery, New York
- 1974 *From Barrie Bates To Billy Apple, 1960-1974*, The Serpentine Gallery, London.
Five Subtractive Connections, The Clocktower, New York.
9 x 9: A Subtraction, 159 East 69th Street, New York.
Diagonal Subtraction, 3 Mercer Street Gallery, New York.
Absence Of Red And Yellow Paint On Floor, 3 Mercer Street Gallery, New York.
- 1975 *Two Subtractions*, Auckland City Art Gallery, Auckland.
28.054 Cubic Metres: A Subtraction, Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland.
Neon Accumulation, 1968, Taj Mahal Gallery, Wellington.
Untitled Subtraction, Wellington Settlement Gallery.
Untitled Subtraction, CSA Gallery, Christchurch.
Neon Accumulation, 1968 (1 & 2), Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth.
- 1976 *- / + 38* (with Jerry Vis), 112 Greene Street Gallery, New York.

- 9 x 9 and Untitled (String Piece)*, Fine Arts Building, New York.
40°, 3 Mercer Street Gallery, New York.
- 1977 *Extension Of The Given*, Leo Castelli Gallery, New York.
- 1978 *Extension Of The Given*, Leo Castelli Gallery, New York.
Billy Apple Video, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse.
- 1979 *Alterations*, Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland.
Censure, Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington.
The Given As An Art-Political Statement (Made Over), Brooke-Gifford Gallery, Christchurch.
New Premises, Peter Webb Galleries, Auckland.
The Given As An Art-Political Statement (Censure), Bosshard Galleries, Dunedin.
Expose, National Art Gallery, Wellington.
Revealed/Concealed, Auckland City Art Gallery, Auckland.
Towards The Centre, Sarjeant Art Gallery, Wanganui.
- 1980 *Alterations*, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth.
Censure, Leo Castelli Gallery, New York.
Censure, Charles Cowles Gallery, New York.
- 1981 *Art For Sale*, Peter Webb Galleries, Auckland.
Points of View, RKS Art, Auckland.
- 1982 *Sculpture* (How Billy Apple Came to be Selling Pieces of the Peter McLeavey Gallery). Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington.
- 1983 *Apple Turns To Gold*, Auckland Coin and Bullion Ltd, Auckland.
- 1984 *Selected Works: 1962-1974*, Leo Castelli Gallery, New York.
- 1986 *New Work* (Artist's Cut/Dealer's Cut), Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington.
- 1987 *Transactions*, George Fraser Gallery, Artspace, Auckland.
Early Works 1958-9, John Leech Gallery, Auckland.
- 1988 *The Divine Proportion*, Artis Gallery, Auckland.
The Cage And The Pedestal (with Wystan Curnow), The Bathhouse, Rotorua.
Recent Paintings (IOU), Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington.
- 1989 *Mirrors*, Artis Gallery, Auckland.
- 1990 *Selected Works: 1967-1990*, Centre for Contemporary Art, Hamilton.
Transactions, Golden Sections, Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1960 *Young Contemporaries*, RBA Galleries, London.

- 1961 *Young Contemporaries*, RBA Galleries, London.
- 1962 *Young Contemporaries*, RBA Galleries, and Arts Council tour.
The London Group, RBA Galleries, London.
Nuts And Bolts! Allan Stone Gallery, New York.
- 1963 *Gallery One: Ten Years*, Gallery One, London.
- 1964 *Group Show*, Pace Gallery, New York.
The American Supermarket, Bianchini Gallery, New York.
Yankee Doodles, Bianchini Gallery, New York.
- 1965 *The Arena Of Love*, Dwan Gallery, New York.
The American Supermarket, Bianchini Gallery, New York.
Current Art, Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia.
Art Turned On, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston.
- 1966 *Light In Art*, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston.
Electric Art, Ileana Sonnabend Gallery, Paris.
Kunstlichtkunst, Stedelijk van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven.
- 1967 *Focus On Light*, New Jersey State Museum, Trenton.
The Rainbow Room, Graham Gallery, New York.
- 1968 *Acquisitions*, Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo.
- 1969 *Superlimited*, The Jewish Museum, New York.
- 1970 *Propositions For Unrealized Projects*, Howard Wise Gallery, New York.
- 1975 *Group Show*, Martha Jackson West, New York.
- 1979 *Group Show*, Fashion Moda, New York.
- 1981 *Alternatives In Retrospect*, The New Museum, New York.
- 1982 *Vision In Disbelief*, The 4th Sydney Biennale, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.
- 1983 *Team McMillan Ford Art Award*, ASA Galleries, Auckland.
- 1985 *Team McMillan Ford Art Award*, Showrooms, Auckland.
- 1986 *The Self*, Bishop Suter Art Gallery, Nelson, and small centres tour.
Auckland/Halifax Exchange, Eye Level Gallery, Halifax.
Group Show, Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington.
- 1987 *When Art Hits The Headlines*, National Art Gallery, Wellington.
The Pop Decade, Lyman Allyn Museum, New London, Connecticut.
Auckland/Halifax Exchange, Artspace, Auckland.
- 1990 *Now See Hear! — Art, Language and Translation*, Wellington City Art Gallery, Wellington.
- 1991 *Signatures of Place*, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth.
U.K. Works, National Art Gallery, Wellington.

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- 1962 John Berger, 'The Harsh Predicament', *The Observer*, February 11.
 William Gaunt, 'Art. Enthusiasms on Parade', *The Sunday Telegraph*, February 18.
 Norbert Lynton, '“Young Contemporaries” 1962', *Art International*, April.
- 1963 Edward Lucie-Smith, '“Smile, Slim, we're having our photo taken”', *The Listener & BBC Television Review*, April 4.
 'Live Stills and Still Lives', *The Times*, May 7.
 Norbert Lynton, 'Billy Apple', *Art International*, May.
- 1964 Calvin Tomkins, 'Art or Not, it's food for thought', *Life*, November 20.
- 1965 *Current Art*. Exhibition catalogue. Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia.
- 1966 Robert Pincus-Witten, 'New York: - Billy Apple', *Artforum*, February.
 'Art. Sculpture: A Times Square of the Mind', *Time*, March 18.
 Vincent Canby, 'City unplugs a Neon Art Show', *New York Times*, October 8.
 Lucy Lippard, *Pop Art*, Thames & Hudson, London.
- 1967 Elizabeth Baker, 'The Light Brigade', *Art News*, March.
 Nan R Piene, 'Feature: Light Art', *Art in America*, May-June.
 Grace Glueck, 'Art Notes. An Apple A Day', *New York Times*, November 12.
- 1968 Jack Burnham, *Beyond Modern Sculpture*, Brazillier, New York.
 Emily Wasserman, 'New York: Billy Apple', *Artforum*, January.
- 1971 Lawrence Alloway, 'Art'. *The Nation*, March 29.
 John Canaday, 'How to Miss a Boat and Catch a Toboggan', *New York Times*, May 16.
- 1973 Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialisation of the Art Object*, Praeger, New York.
- 1974 *From Barrie Bates to Billy Apple, 1960-1974*.
 Exhibition catalogue, with essay by Paul Stitelman. Arts Council of Great Britain.
 Paul Stitelman, 'Billy Apple', *Arts Magazine*, April.
 Jennifer Oille, 'From Barrie Bates to Billy Apple', *Arts Review*, April.
 Tony del Renzio and Jennifer Oille, 'London', *Art and Artists*, July.
 Rudolf Arnheim, '... And This is About Conceptual Art', *New York Times*, July 14.
- 1975 Paul Stitelman, 'Shifting with Billy Apple', *Arts Magazine*, February.

- Frances Parkin, 'Billy Apple's Art of Living', *New Zealand Listener*, August 2.
- T.J. McNamara, 'Apple Art Essay in Awareness', *New Zealand Herald*, October 4.
- 1976 Wystan Curnow, 'Billy Apple in New Zealand', *Auckland City Art Gallery Bulletin* 61, May.
- 1978 Wystan Curnow, 'Art Places: The New York Scene 2', *Art New Zealand*, February/March/April.
- 1979 'Avant-garde, with a P and T touch', *Auckland Star*, October 16.
- T.J. McNamara, 'Artist Explores New Forms', *New Zealand Herald*, October 18.
- Hamish Keith, 'The Tribal Art of Alteration', *New Zealand Listener*, December 8.
- 1980 Wystan Curnow, 'Report: The Given as an Art-Political Statement. Nine Works By Billy Apple, 1979-1980', *Art New Zealand*, Summer.
- 1981 Tony Green, 'Billy Apple's Art for Sale', *Art New Zealand*, Winter.
- Wystan Curnow, 'Billy Apple. Points of View: RKS', *Art New Zealand*, Summer.
- Alternatives in Retrospect, An Historical Overview 1969-75*. Exhibition catalogue, essay by Mary Delahoyd, comments by Jacki Apple, as well as artists, gallery directors and Billy Apple, The New Museum, New York.
- Robyn Brentano, with Mark Savitt, eds. *112 Greene Street Workshop. History, Artists and Artworks*, New York University Press, New York.
- 1982 Francis Pound, 'The Label. Billy Apple's Work on Collard's Red', *Wineglass*, November.
- Sandra Peacocke, 'Behind the Apple', interview, *Cha Cha*, December/January.
- 1985 Francis Pound, *40 Modern New Zealand Painters*, Penguin Books, Auckland.
- Wystan Curnow, 'Working with Billy Apple', *Splash* 3, May.
- 1986 Ian Wedde, 'McLeavey Displays a little piece of Apple', *Evening Post*, November 26.
- Elva Bett, *New Zealand Art: A Modern Perspective*, Reed/Methuen, Auckland.
- 1984 T.J. McNamara, 'High Prices Prevail in the Year of the Apple', *New Zealand Herald*, January 3.
- Wystan Curnow, 'Anzart As Is', *Studio International*, July/August.
- Donald Kuspit, 'New York: Billy Apple', *Artforum International*, July/August.
- 1987 *The Pop Decade. The Bianchini Gallery in the Sixties*. Exhibition

catalogue, essay by Barbara Zabel. Lyman Allyn Museum, New London, Connecticut.

Jim and Mary Barr, *When Art Hits the Headlines*. Exhibition catalogue, National Art Gallery, Wellington.

Warwick Brown, 'Billy Apple: Art that Money Can't Buy', *Dominion/Sunday Times*, March 29.

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Patrick Smith, 'Billy Bold', *Sunday Auckland Star*, November 27.

1990 Richard Dale, 'Billy Apple', *New Zealand Herald*, September 13.

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1967 'Live Stills', *Arts Magazine*, February, pp. 46-47.

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1968 'Fashion is the Medium', *Harpers Bazaar*, April, pp. 125, 172, 174-6, 178-9.

1980 'Towards The Centre', *Art New Zealand*, Summer, p.5. 'Alterations: The Given as an Art-Political Statement', *Art New Zealand*, Summer, p. 12.

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'For Sale, Folk Art', *Artforum International*, November, p. 110.

1981 'From the Gellert Family Collection', *Art New Zealand*, Winter p.5. 'Sold', *Art New Zealand*, Summer, p.5.

1984 'Gifted: Pink', (with Wystan Curnow), *And* 2, p.47.

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