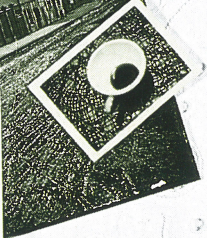
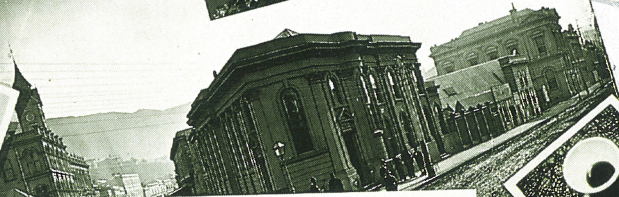
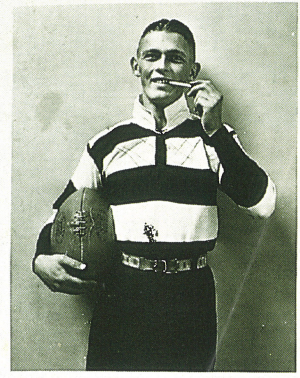


Lest we Forget

3 September – 13 November 1994



City Gallery
WELLINGTON

Photography, Memory and National Character

Lest we Forget

Photography, Memory and National Character

Through photographic images, found in the family album, popular culture, advertising and in the arena of fine art, we remember ourselves and our social histories. In so doing we reflect upon the country we live in. *Lest we Forget* is an exhibition which brings together images by 21 photographers who have photographed aspects of New Zealand over the last 100 years. The exhibition explores the relationship of photography to memory, nostalgia and the perception of national identity or character. In covering the last century it explores shifts in public perception as to what qualifies or defines national identity.

In many ways the exhibition is broadly based. Unlike many of the photographic shows presented at the City Gallery, Wellington in recent years, it mixes varied approaches to photography and relates the work of contemporary practitioners to New Zealand's photographic history. This interplay between photographic styles and moments allows the opportunity to review the changing influence of images from the recent and distant past.

Of equal importance to this show is its regional focus. Due to the period covered and the range of images and approaches, we took the opportunity to feature work by photographers who currently reside in Wellington, or who have spent a significant period living and working in Wellington. Therefore, the exhibition remembers and celebrates the substantial photographic history associated with Wellington. Many of the photographs consequently relate to Wellington and its history. Conversely Wellington's photographers have always roamed the country to capture New Zealand on film. As a result, *Lest we Forget* moves between the local and the national to explore its themes.

Many of the images have been consciously produced to describe qualities that are characteristic of New Zealand or New Zealanders. This is particularly true to photographs produced for commercial and nationalistic reasons. Joseph Zacharia's photographs, for example, were produced as postcards and as such were the first images many had of New Zealand. Some images reveal in retrospect characteristics that were not the priority of the photographer. When we look at an image such as Bragge's *Cnr Lambton Quay and Customhouse Quay, Wellington 1877*, we may find the placement of grand Victorian architecture within a rough and muddy setting paradoxical. However, this photograph was originally commissioned by the city fathers to promote Wellington as an industrial and civic centre.



James Bragge *Cnr Lambton Quay and Customhouse Quay, Wellington 1877*

The snapshot is a specific case where conscious and unconscious characteristics are revealed. Snapshots in family collections are often generic, revealing common interests among a group of people or a culture, such as family rituals and leisure pursuits. Priest's photograph *C.F. Priest and K.F.C. Priest* has all the charm of the snapshot and yet through its focus on torso and arms it draws attention to complexities of the familial relationship. By their nature, snapshots can be spontaneous and accidental, selecting and framing information in a way unintended by the photographer.

A number of photographers whose work in this exhibition can be described as documentary intentionally explore and reorder perceptions of national identity. While Les Cleveland's works function as historical records they also move between the autobiographical and the poetic to provide an evocative social commentary on New Zealand life in the 1950s. He is one of a number of these photographers who have photographed the New Zealand landscape. Anne Noble, for example, in her image *Sheep and Lilies of the Field, Wanganui River, 1982* evokes a quintessential New Zealand scene and yet the elements – grass, sheep and lilies – are all imported. In different ways these photographers resist the clichés promoted through the tourist trade.

Many of the images seem ironic in retrospect and reveal shifting cultural priorities. The photograph by Gordon Burt, *A Bloke's Smoke*, an advertisement aimed at sports people throughout the 1930s, is particularly poignant now given that *Smokefree* is a sponsor of Wellington rugby. Similarly Cleveland's photograph *Women in beer garden about 1960* reminds us of a time when public bars were restricted to men only. However, more



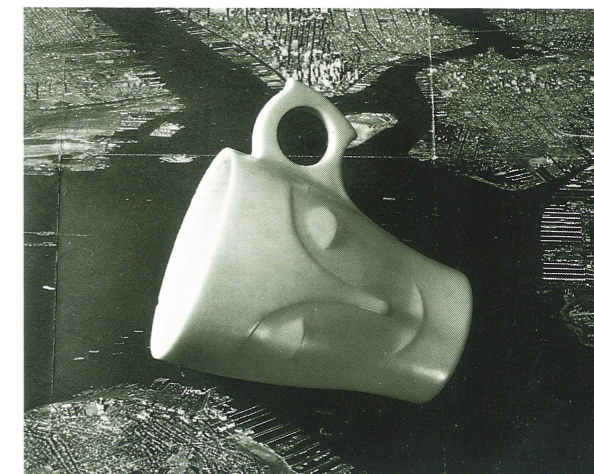
Neil Penman *Ramiri Wineera and her extended family, 1987*

recent photographs by Peter Black and Bruce Connew suggest continuing underlying tensions between the sexes. The show also documents changing definitions of biculturalism. Ken Niven's photograph *Untitled, 1953* during the Queen's visit, bears witness to the incorporation of Maori motifs into New Zealand's popular culture. The image of a warrior is one frequently used as a standard bearer of national identity. Alternatively, Neil Penman's portrait of *Ramiri Wineera and her extended family 1987* records a cultural hybridity from the other side of the coin. Her vital relationship with her whanau is manifested through photography and its placement in the home.

All of these many approaches to photography and the imaging of national identity provide points of reference for the work of contemporary artists Ruth Watson, Terrence Handscomb and Gavin Hipkins. In different ways these artists explore cultural hybridity and its relationship to popular culture and national identity. All are conscious of the speed at which images and information circulate in global culture. Terrence Handscomb refers to this as 'the horizonless domain', 'analogously linked to open ended computer programmes'.¹ He generates his work through the computer recombining existing photographs and illustrations to create new images. Both Watson and Hipkins explore the integration of forms derived from other countries and cultures into the local and domestic context. Watson's *Brancusi Mug* from the *Souvenirs du Monde 1994* series highlights the influence of a European artistic tradition within an icon of the New Zealand vernacular – the Ovaltine mug.



Peter Black *New Plymouth 1984*



Ruth Watson *Souvenirs du Monde (Brancusi Mug) 1994*

While *Lest we Forget* records many aspects of culture that seem particularly pertinent to New Zealand, the meanings of these photographs remain elusive and change over time. Photography is often classified according to subject matter or genre. This exhibition seeks to be more open ended. *Lest we Forget* suggests that the power of photography, regardless of genre, rests in its ability to reflect on the minutiae of daily life as much as on grand themes. It is through this countervailing tendency that photography has such an impact in shaping the continuity of our lives.

Gregory Burke and Deborah Lawler-Dormer
Exhibition Curators

1. From artist's statement supplied for *Lest we Forget*

List of works

Peter Black

- New Plymouth*, 1984
cibachrome print
158 x 236 mm
Collection: Dowse Art Museum
- Samoan Assembly of God Church VII, Berhampore*, Wellington, 1980
410 x 275 mm
Courtesy of the artist
- Selwyn Toogood, Carterton*, 1981
285 x 190 mm
Courtesy of the artist
- Arthurs Pass* 1985, from *Moving Pictures* series
410 x 275 mm
Courtesy of the artist
- Panorama Heights, Brooklyn*, 1989, from *Sites* portfolio
220 x 300 mm
Collection: National Library of New Zealand
- New Plymouth* 1984
255 x 380 mm
Courtesy of the artist
- Waipawa* 1986, from *Moving Pictures* series
410 x 275 mm
Courtesy of the artist

James Bragge

- Cnr Lambton Quay and Customhouse Quay*, Wellington 1877
200 x 250 mm
Collection: Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

Gordon Burt

- Phillips Electrical Stand, Winter Show Buildings*, Wellington, c. 1930s
200 x 250 mm
Collection: Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa
- A Bloke's Smoke. Rugby Pipe Tobacco advertisement for W.D. & H.O. Wills Ltd, Petone*, c. 1930s
200 x 250 mm
Collection: Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa
- Cake shop*, 1931
255 x 305 mm
Collection: National Library of New Zealand
- Sitting room*, c. 1935
230 x 305 mm
Collection: National Library of New Zealand

B. Clark

- Wellington from Mt Victoria*, 1957
305 x 240 mm
Collection: National Library of New Zealand

Les Cleveland

- The 'Phar lap' Fish and Chip Shop*, 31 Molesworth Street, Wellington, 1957
258 x 309 mm
Collection: Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa
- Doug Macalister driving war surplus Bren Carrier used for carting mining timber out of the bush*, 1957
vintage silver gelatin print
190 x 220 mm
Courtesy of the artist and Peter McLeavey Gallery
- John Angas ("Opo") demonstrating how to start his Model A Ford truck at Mussel Point, Haast*, 1966
vintage silver gelatin print
150 x 210 mm
Courtesy of the artist and Peter McLeavey Gallery
- European Hotel, Charleston*, 1956.
Mick Sheldon, proprietor in doorway
230 x 200 mm
Courtesy of the artist and Peter McLeavey Gallery

- Matron and children at Otaki Health Camp, December 1960*
vintage silver gelatin print
210 x 200 mm
Courtesy of the artist and Peter McLeavey Gallery
- Dredge buckets, Greenstone Valley near Kumara*, 1959
200 x 235 mm
Courtesy of the artist and Peter McLeavey Gallery
- Women in beer garden about 1960*
245 x 200 mm
Courtesy of the artist and Peter McLeavey Gallery

Bruce Connew

- Army recruits, Waiouru*, 1983
123 x 185 mm
Courtesy of the artist
- Rugby social, Reefton*, 1986
155 x 231 mm
Courtesy of the artist
- Towtruck driver, Auckland*, 1984
231 x 155 mm
Courtesy of the artist

Terrence Handcomb

- Untitled*, 1994
computer manipulated colour laser print
197 x 262 mm
Courtesy of the artist

Gavin Hipkins

- Lozenge with blue*, c. 1993
colour laser copies laminated
2310 x 2310 mm
Courtesy of the artist

Mary Macpherson

- The signs between Waikanae and Otaki Gorge*, c. 1986
enlarged colour contact sheet
1070 x 1275 mm
Collection: Dowse Art Museum
- David Gray*, 1993 from the series *White Thread*
print from colour negative
320 x 315 mm
Courtesy of the artist

James Keith Nichols

- Untitled*, n.d.
150 x 230 mm
Collection: New Zealand Centre for Photography

Ken Niven

- Untitled*, n.d.
169 x 245 mm
Collection: Alexander Turnbull Library
- Untitled*, 1953
kodachrome print
253 x 202 mm
Collection: Alexander Turnbull Library

Ann Noble

- Momentos Pipiriki* 1981
228 x 338 mm
Courtesy of the artist
- Sheep and lilies of the field, Wanganui River*, 1982
145 x 215 mm
Courtesy of the artist

John Pascoe

- Plimmerton School, Porirua*, c. 1944
284 x 276 mm
Collection: Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa
- Trainee physical education instructors, March 1944*
264 x 296 mm
Collection: Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

Neil Penman

- Ramiri Wineera and her extended family*, 1987
403 x 305 mm
Courtesy of the artist

Richard Priest

- C.F. Priest and K.F.C. Priest*, n.d.
405 x 329 mm
Collection: Dowse Art Museum
- Evans Bay*, Wellington, n.d.
405 x 329 mm
Collection: Dowse Art Museum

Lucien Rizos

- House from moving car*, 1979-81
255 x 385 mm
Courtesy of the artist and the Alexander Turnbull Library

- Wellington*, 1978-79
255 x 385 mm
Courtesy of the artist and the Alexander Turnbull Library

- Untitled* 1978-79
255 x 385 mm
Courtesy of the artist and the Alexander Turnbull Library

Grant Sheehan

- Swimmers at Oriental Bay*, 1993
cibachrome print
265 x 390 mm
Courtesy of the artist

Ruth Watson

- 'Souvenirs du Monde' 1994*
6 cibachrome photographs from series
80 x 90 mm (each)
Courtesy of the artist

Ans Westra

- Wairoa*, 1964
282 x 282 mm
Collection: Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa
- Hokitika Bar*, 1971
276 x 231 mm
Collection: Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa
- Untitled from the New Zealand Portfolio*, 1970-1973
212 x 282 mm
Jim Barr and Mary Barr
Collection: Waikato Museum of Art and History - Te Whare o Waikato, Hamilton

Joseph Zacharia

- "Dominion Day". Illuminations over the main entrance of the Government Buildings*, Wellington, N.Z., 26.9.07
275 x 185 mm
Collection: William Main
- The Stranded Whale at Lyall Bay*, Wellington, N.Z., n.d.
147 x 242 mm
Collection: William Main

Unknown Photographer

- Untitled*, n.d. (x 4)
4 cibachrome prints from kodachrome 35 mm transparencies
204 x 255 mm (each)
Collection: New Zealand Centre for Photography

City Gallery

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All works are silver gelatin prints unless otherwise stated.