

# NEW ZEALAND PHOTOGRAPHY

35c

Number 13





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# New Zealand Photography

Number 13

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## Editorial

We get our share of complaints about the magazine, as well as compliments. Most of the complaints are about content: we're either carrying not enough of something, or too much of something else, or both. A good part of the time we agree with our complainants: for instance, when they say that the magazine seems to be dominated by a small coterie of Auckland photographers, or when they complain that the strong historical content of the magazine's earlier days has now been greatly weakened. But we can only publish what we have available for publication, and conversely cannot publish what we don't have. This magazine has no permanent staff of contributors and the Editor and Auckland Editor readily acknowledge that their writing and the work of photographers they know about, and therefore ask for contributions, occupy an unhealthy large proportion of the magazine. There is absolutely no restriction on who may send in articles of photographs for consideration. We're especially short of good historical photographs and articles, and we would like to see the work of a lot more photographers from places other than Auckland, Hamilton and Wellington, though we won't reject out of hand any work from photographers in those cities. We won't guarantee that we'll publish everything we receive, but on the other hand we can't publish what we haven't got.

Bruce Weatherall

#### In this issue:

Photographs by Bryan James.

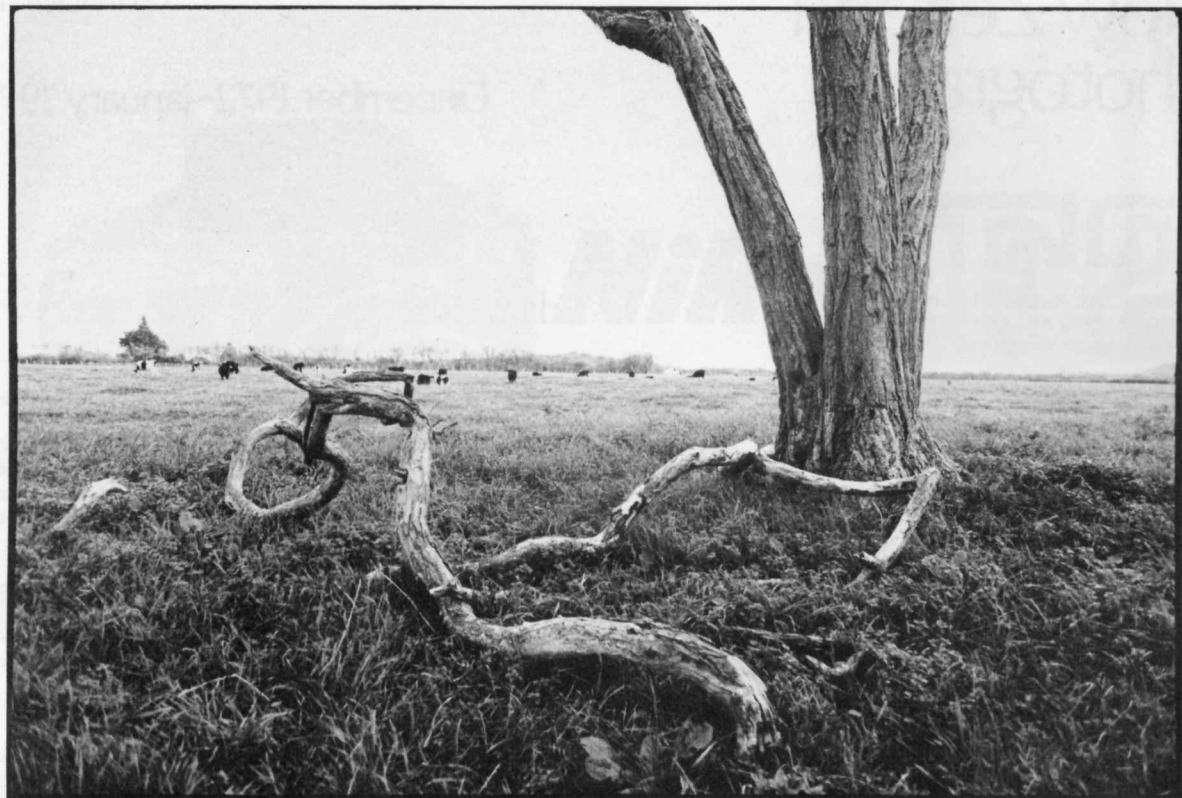
Photographs by Alan Leatherby.

Historical New Zealand Photographs in Australia.

Do Van Toan's Exhibition Reviewed.

Book Reviews.

Cover Photograph by Alan Leatherby



Waikato '71

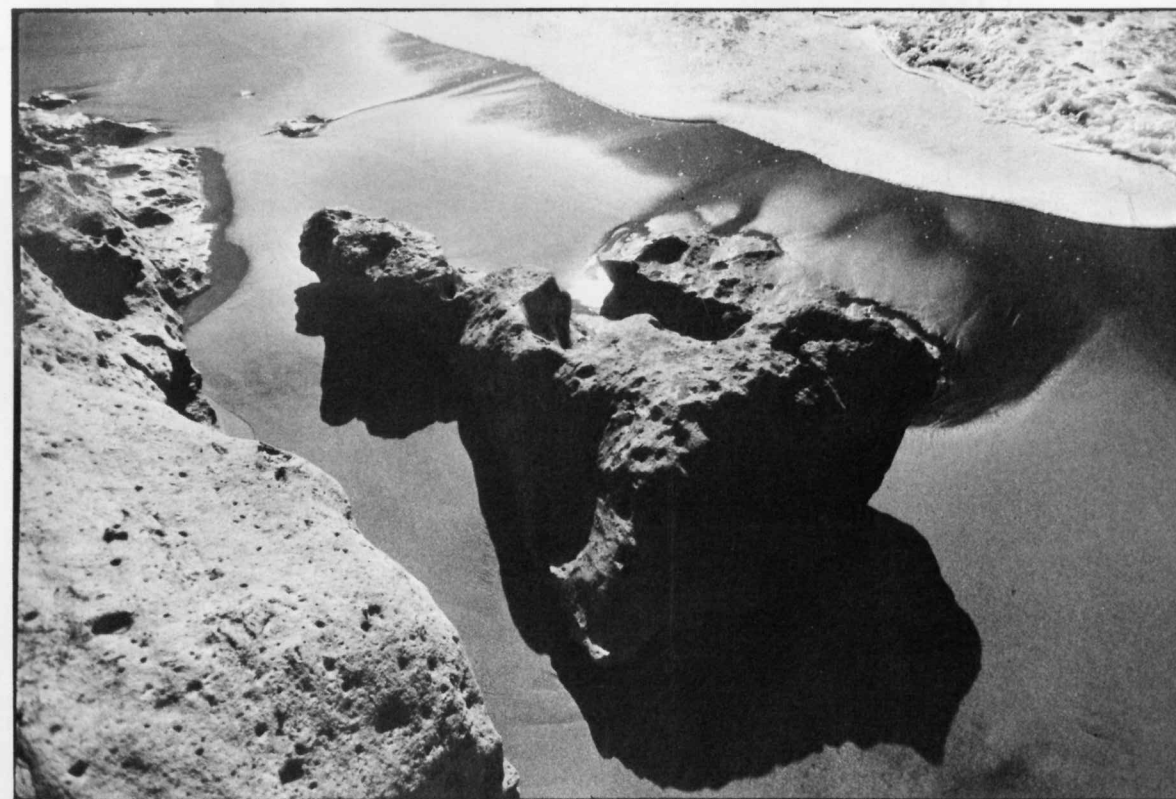


Orongaronga River Mouth '72

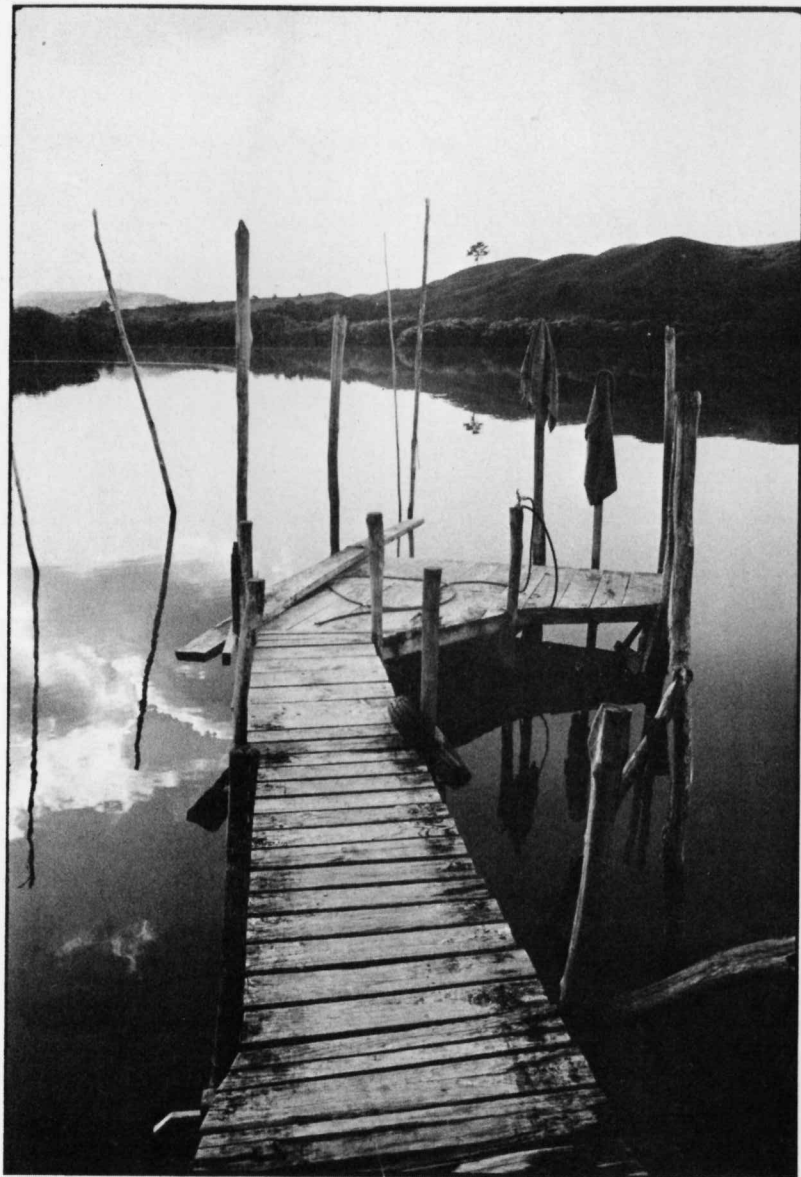
## BRYAN JAMES

### Nature

"My photos show nature, man's imposition on nature, and maybe a way man can be part of nature. I think the two can look good together but earthmovers and buildings don't—ever. Nature seems to get in the way of our jet-age society (ha). I only hope it keeps tripping me up."



Hot Water Beach '71



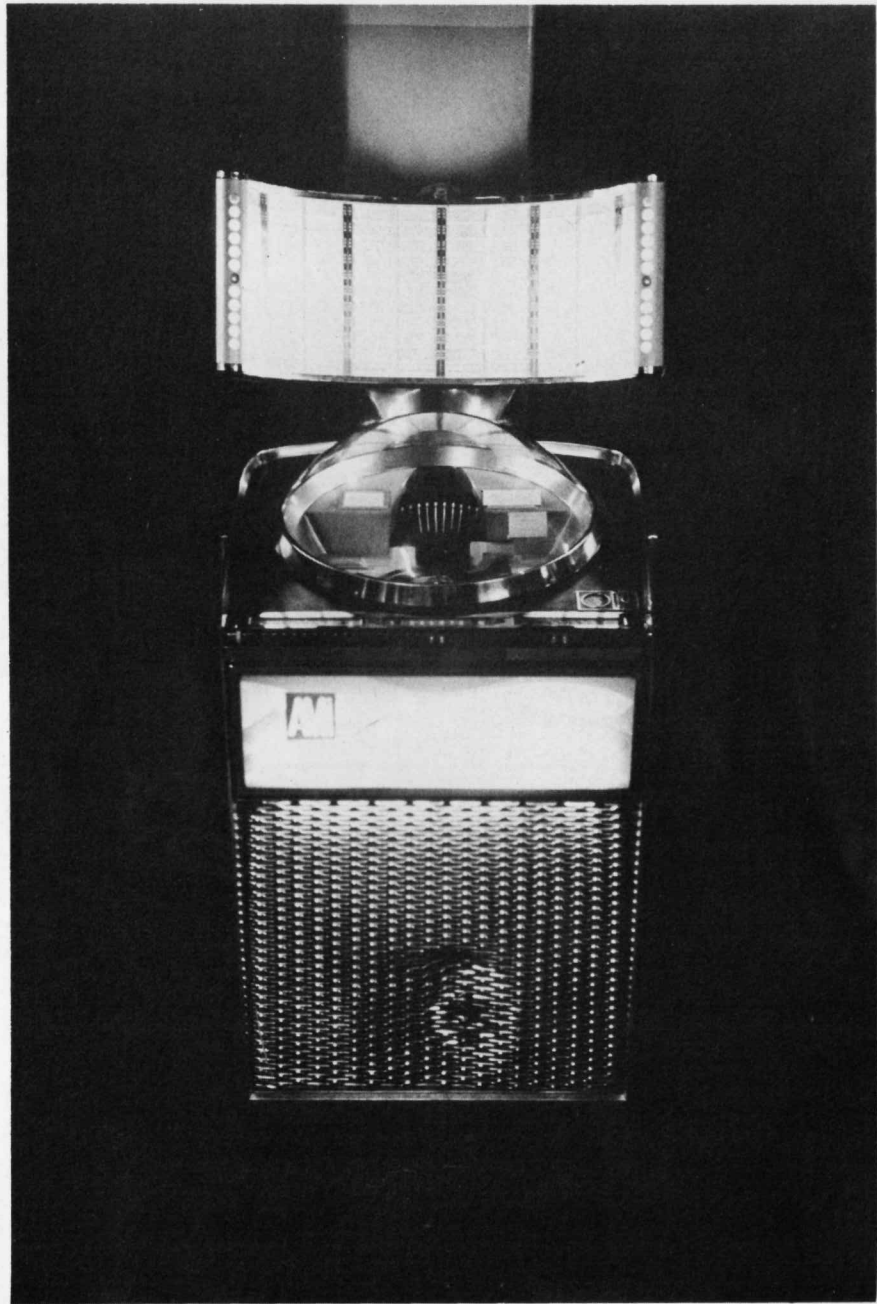
Northland '71



Hamilton '72



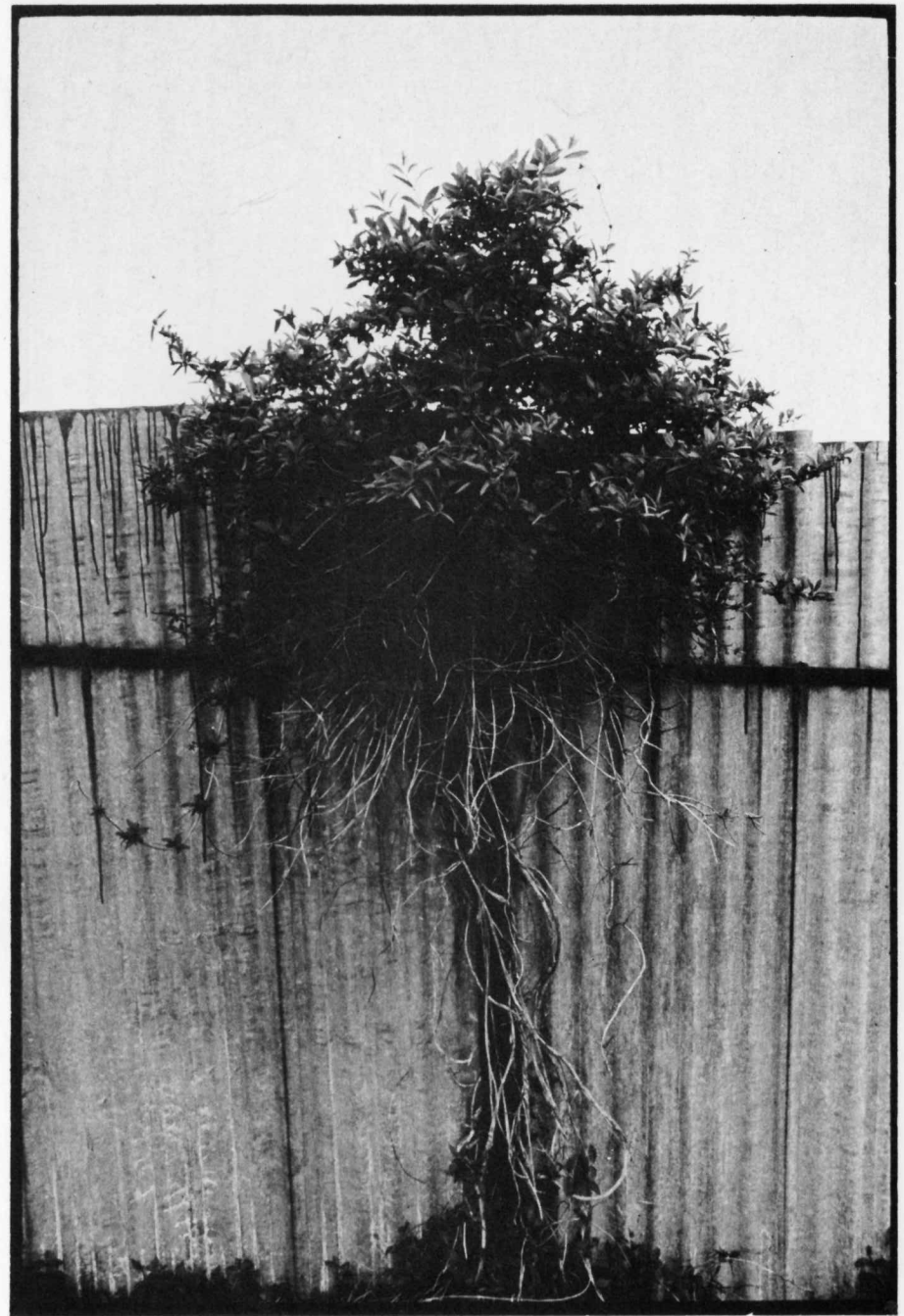
Coromandel '71



Waiwera, 1972

ALAN LEATHERBY

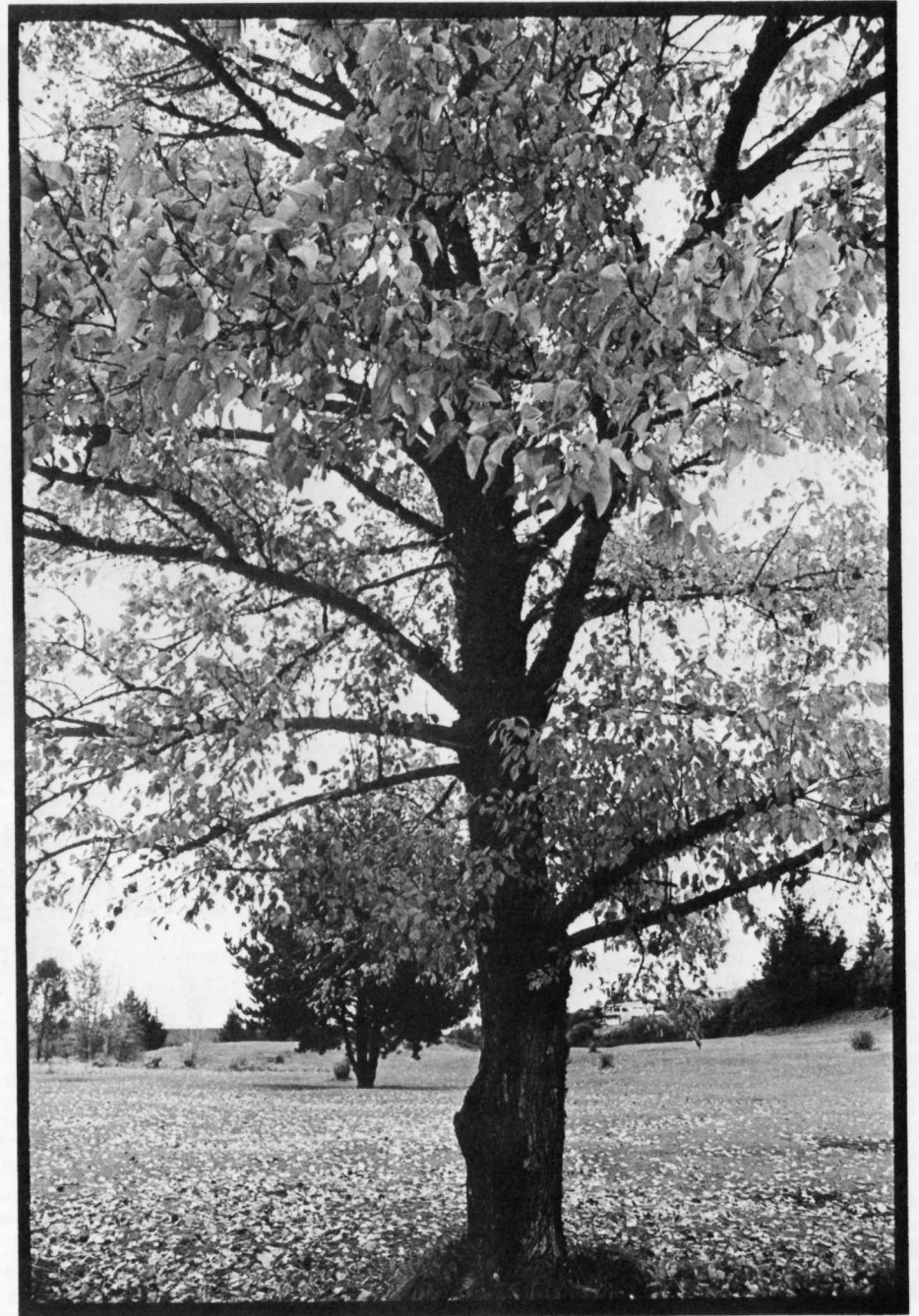
Four Photographs



Hamilton 1970



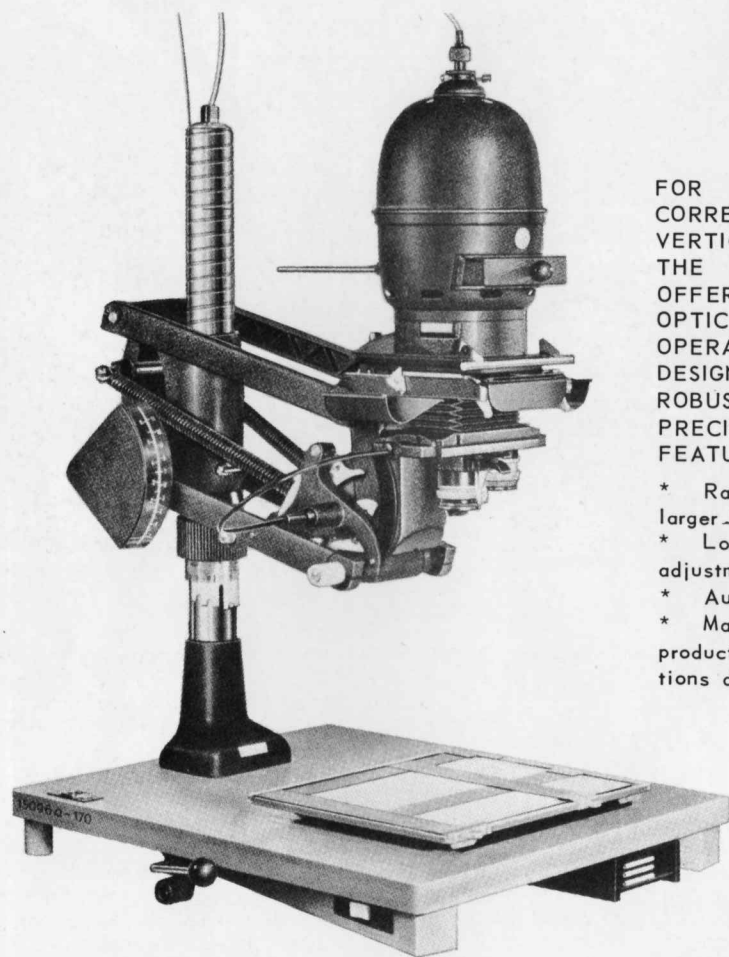
Hamilton 1970



Mangakino 1970

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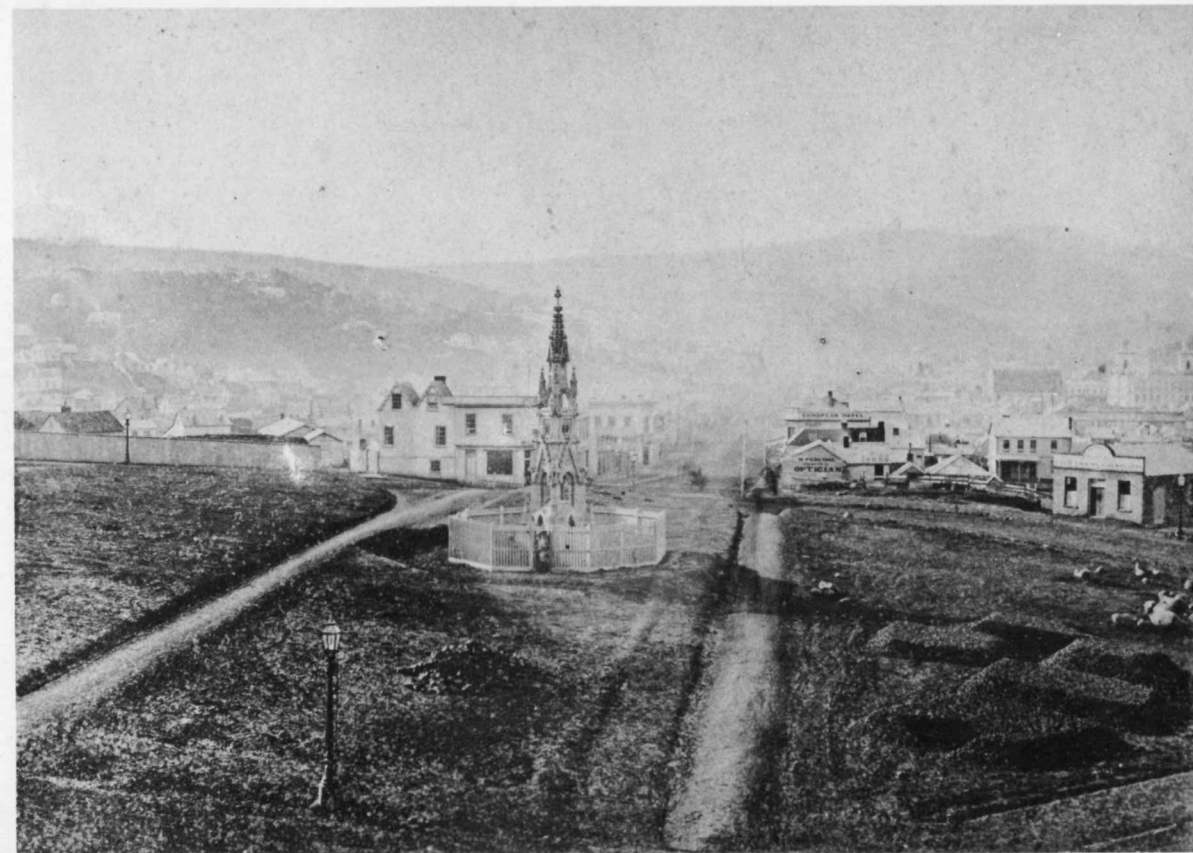
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Cargill's Monument, In the Octagon, Dunedin - Ferguson Collection.

## Historical New Zealand Photographs in Australia

*Wellington photographic teacher, collector and historian Bill Main (whose book "Wellington Through a Victorian Lens" is due to be published early in 1973) has recently visited Australia to look for early New Zealand photographs in libraries there. He made some most interesting discoveries, and brought back prints of a number of photographs, some of which are printed here. These are from the Australian National Library in Canberra. Bill also gave us these notes on the National Library collection:*

The Australian National Library collection of New Zealand photographs would compare very favourably with collections in some of the better New Zealand provincial museums, numbering about three or four thousand prints. They are arranged in alphabetical region-subject classification. Individual numbering has only been given to those photographs that have a negative, hence requests for specific items could be difficult unless orders are accompanied with a specific description of the photograph's image content.

The collection appears to have come from three major sources, foremost of which would be the Rex NanKivell donation. At some time during the collection's formation a decision was made to detach or cut out New Zealand material from albums containing a mixture of photographs from all over the world. While this simplifies the researcher's task some preservationists would object to the destruction of the albums. In all fairness however it must be pointed out that volumes devoted entirely to New Zealand material or with some specific historic origin, have been left intact. Therefore the bulk of the collection is in a separate photographs section. Each individual print is housed in a soft plastic envelope which prevents the sensitive surfaces of the ageing prints from abrasions as well as localising chemical deterioration. No New Zealand library employs this admirable system.

The feature which makes the New Zealand prints in the collection quite unique is the large proportion of good quality prints from which excellent negatives could be made. A reason for this can be put forward. The New Zealand section of the collection probably remains relatively dormant year in and year out, hence less damage has occurred through the excessive handling to which major New Zealand print collections are prone. Not only are certain individual prints in the library the best I have seen, but the number of photographs exceeding eight inches by six inches is the biggest housed in one collection that I have encountered. Most museums and libraries appear to be embarrassed by "big photographs". They are almost non-existent in New Zealand because they



Pelichet Bay, Dunedin—Ferguson Collection.

have received priority treatment in copying. However because most New Zealand institutions do not carry a full time photographer on their staff, the quality of these copy negatives varies from place to place. Once copied, a big print is seldom retained; at least this was the trend up to a few years ago. Therefore the Australian National Library has in its possession photographs which on the whole, could provide better quality negatives for printed reproduction, even though most other institutions hold duplicate copies on their negative files.

The more rare and specialized regions of the collection are:

1. Tremendously clear and sharp photographs of the central plateau district of the North Island, especially Tarawera (both before and after the eruption). These were taken by G.V. (George Valentine—see "19th Century New Zealand Photographs", John B. Turner, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, 1970).

2. Many early photographs of Dunedin which I suspect are not generally known. These are distinguishable by the



Dunedin: site of the city—Ferguson Collection.

gold border around the photograph's mount.

3. An excellent series of about a dozen views depicting the construction of the military road from Auckland to the Waikato, during the Maori Wars by W. Temple, R.A.

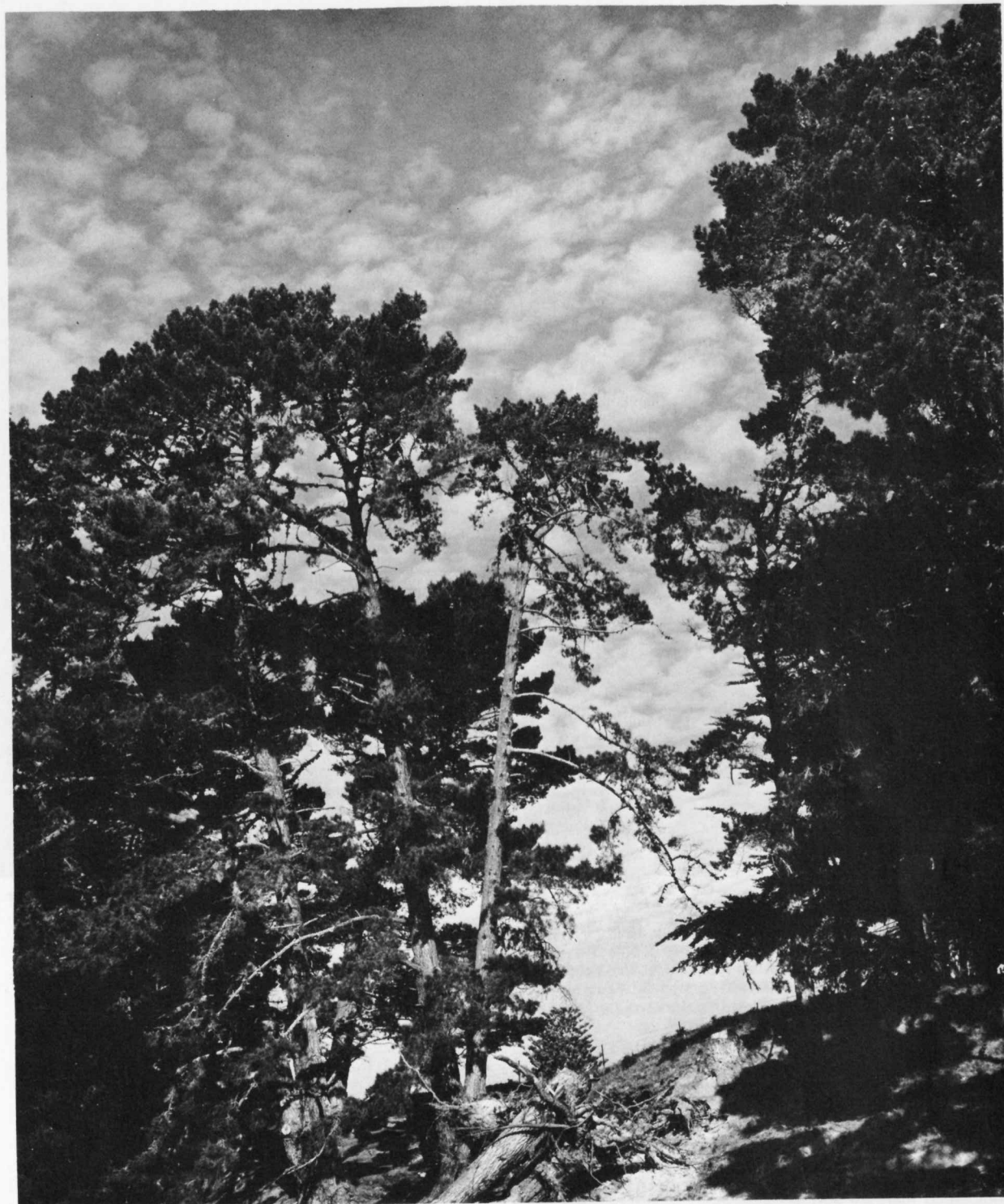
4. A series (incorrectly labelled "Tuapeka Gold Mining") showing what I believe to be the laying of a telegraph cable from North to South Island c. 1860s. Or cable laying from New Zealand to Australia. (The lighthouse which appears in so many views would lead to positive identification.)

5. Unique individual prints such as the first N.Z. railway engine, women's rights, 1893 elections, etc.

In summary the collection, though not as large as those in the Alexander Turnbull Library, Dominion Museum or the Auckland Institute and Museum, does have considerable merit as already outlined and therefore cannot be overlooked by anyone attempting a definitive pictorial history of New Zealand.

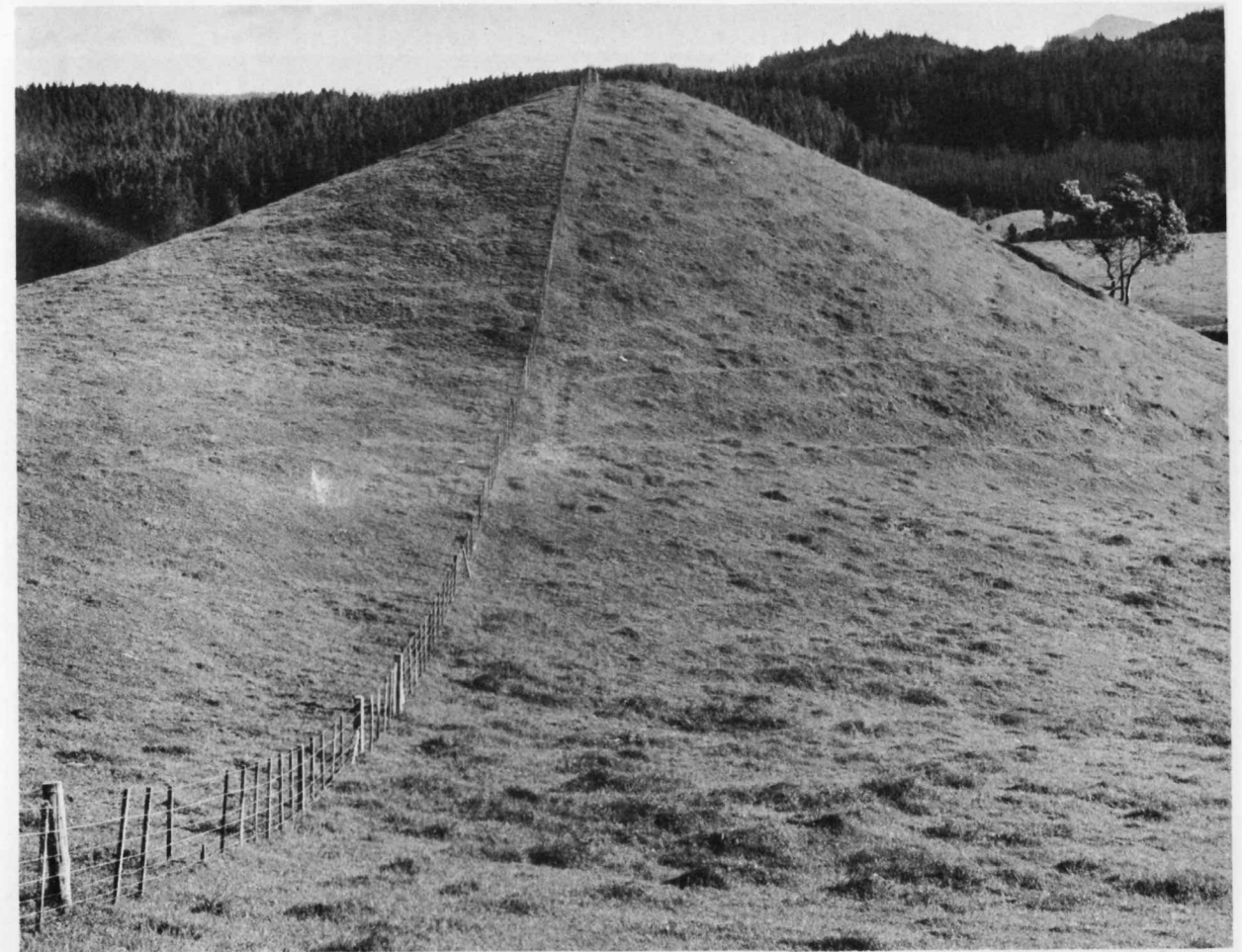
William Main





Pines, 1971

## Exhibition Review



Miles Farm, I, 1971.

**Photographs by Do Van Toan, Petar/James Gallery Ltd, Auckland. September 4-20, 1972. Reviewed by John B. Turner.**

In the past year few if any would have surpassed Do Van Toan's energy or consistency in producing fine personal statements with a camera. It is perhaps fitting, therefore that he should be the first photographer to exhibit at the enterprising new Petar/James Gallery which, like Wellington's Peter McLeavey Gallery, works along the lines of overseas galleries which deal exclusively with the work of a few hand-picked artists.

Do Van Toan was born in 1946 near Hanoi, Vietnam. He received a French education in Vietnam and in 1965 gained a Colombo Plan scholarship to study in New Zealand. He is currently completing a Ph.D. in civil engineering at the University of Auckland. Introduced to photography at the age of 12, he became seriously interested while taking pictures to send home to his family in 1969.

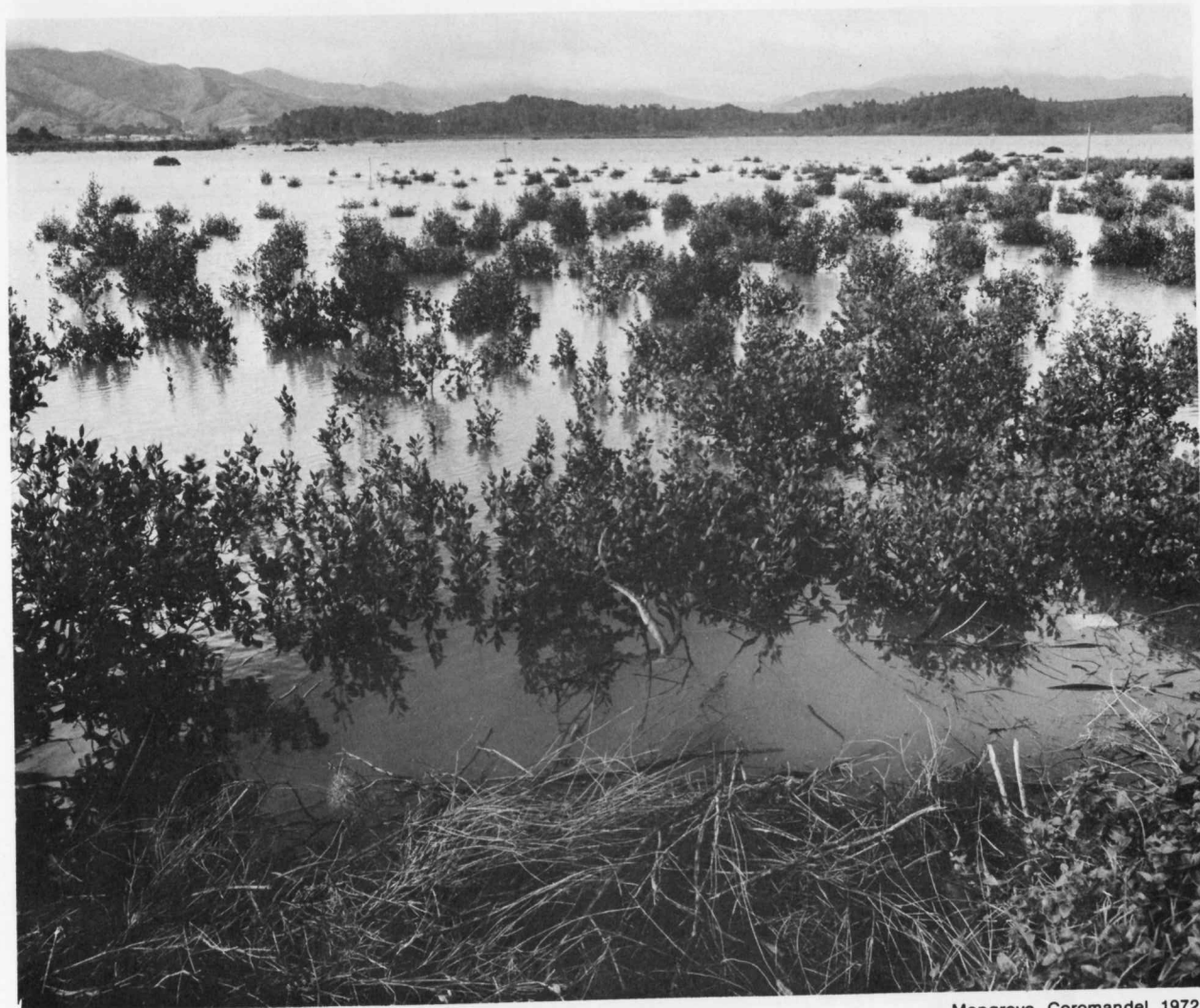
Toan's 35-print exhibition spans his three year involvement with photography. He bravely included three early 1970 images with an overly romantic, almost "pictorial" feeling, most evident in *Bethels Beach*, with its dark, moody contours set off by brilliant sun reflections in the wet sand. (The first of four photographs to sell, incidentally.) A photograph of wind-swept grass swirling over rolling hummocks was particularly well seen although it suffers from slight camera shake and slightly dismal printing.

There is a decided improvement in his later work which moves toward a more incisive objectivity which restrains but doesn't stifle the essentially romantic quality of his work. *Ena, Kingseat Psychiatric Hospital, 1971* (see *NEW ZEALAND PHOTOGRAPHY* No. 6), a passionate plea for understanding the plight of a mentally retarded child, is the powerful sole exception in this show. It punches hard in spite of sluggish printing.

Toan's greatest affinity is undoubtedly with the landscape, and in particular, with trees. He has discovered numerous examples of both—almost as many within the city as in the countryside. He is literally showing many New Zealanders the beauty of their own country for the first time, as I witnessed when one couple pointed out details of their own farm to one another in delighted surprise.

I have seen many photographs of pine trees but none came anywhere near Toan's *Pines, 1971* in expressing their scraggy individuality with such beauty and strength. The harsh two o'clock lighting and a fallen tree add emphasis to the gap in the trees. A hump of foreground is echoed in the trees foliage as it works its way up the branches in patchy lumps. To cap it all, even the clouds in the sky take up the same rhythm of random shapes. A slightly grey sky perfectly sets off the bright pine needle tips and a brighter, clearer sky area between the trees combines with the rich shadows to provide a strong depth illusion which optically charges the print.

*Otama Bay, Coromandel, 1971* and *Lotus Leaves, Domain,*



Mangrove, Coromandel, 1972.

1972 share a similar depth illusion—a sort of negative-positive charge which lends them an intriguing, almost abstract quality. *Miles' Farm I*, 1971 does a similar thing in a different way. The forest fringe beyond the comparatively bald central hill, it's swell beautifully emphasised by a fence leading from the left foreground to the centre of the distant hill crest, gives the subtle illusion, at times, that the trees are actually bordering the top of the hill instead of being well beyond and below it. Of the other landscapes, *Pear Trees*, *Clevedon*, *Bamboo*, *Auckland*, *Ratas*, *Waitakere*, *Reeds*, *Coromandel*, and *Trees*, *Domain* (although printed too grey), were superb. All were made in 1972.

However, there is a lack of intellectual as distinct from photographic clarity about *Mangrove*, *Coromandel*, 1972 (illustrated) suggested by the inclusion of a piece of paper floating in the right foreground. The main interest of the picture is undoubtedly in the mangroves of the title and a fantastic tangle of dry grass in the foreground. The

inclusion of the large stretch of water leading to the huddle of tiny houses beneath the distant hills and heavy clouds, does help to describe the terrain. But why the paper? It seems too inoffensive in itself to even weakly suggest the conservation message it might have been; if that was what the photographer intended.

In *Baker*, *Coromandel*, 1972 and *Disused Maori Church*, *Coromandel*, 1971, both of which are interesting images, the latter in particular, there is a similar lack of intellectual strength. The pictures admirably suggest what the photographer felt about the subjects, but not what he thought about them. In contrast, similar kinds of images: *Dining Room*, *Redoubt Road*, 1971 and *Lee's Room*, *Auckland*, 1972 work totally because of the photographer's definitely warm approval of the distinctive modes of living described and suggested by these interiors.

Of the six portraits and one delightful group shot of the cheeky *Curnow Cousins*; *Lawrence*, 1971, and *The Miles*, *Coromandel*, 1971 are superb, with a delightful



The Miles, Coromandel, 1971.

combination of the subjects' relaxation and camera awareness which emphasises the character of these outdoor "sitters". *Louis*, *Auckland*, 1971 is a far more romantic and personal photograph of a young woman, eyes closed, sensually nudging the collar of her open-necked blouse. It is a surprisingly warm and sensuous picture, although the print is cool in tone. It's like finding a spot of warmth in an otherwise cold room. The other portraits lack the depth of these three. The inclusion of indifferent statements like *Old Door*, *Coromandel*, 1971, *Grafton Road*, *Auckland*, 1971 (a good record), and *Oaks*, *Mount Eden*, 1972 in favour of several stronger images seen in the recent Barry Lett Galleries group show, was a mistake, I think. But altogether, this was a distinctive and impressive array from only three years work.

The presentation of the photographs was simple, inexpensive and effective. The prints, ranging in size from about 5 x 7 to 10 x 12 inches were mounted on a white or

black card about 16 x 20 inches, bordered by a grey cardboard aperture mount and further stiffened by a backing card from which the prints were hung. Presumably to encourage sales to collectors of other forms of printmaking, Toan's photographs were said to be limited to editions of five, which is unnecessarily restrictive on two counts. It isn't fashionable yet for Auckland's "switched on" art public to collect photographs; and secondly, photographers should know that their negatives won't weaken with each printing. On the contrary, each new print should get better as one learns more about each negative. Number and date prints by all means, but there seems no need to arbitrarily limit editions of original prints in photography.

Do Van Toan's photographs are available at \$30.00 each from the Petar/James Gallery Ltd, Lower Ground Floor, General Building, Cnr. Shortland and O'Connell Streets, Auckland 1.

John B. Turner

## Book Reviews

### NOTES ON THE COUNTRY I LIVE IN.

Photographs by Ans Westra, with text by James K. Baxter and Tim Shadbolt. Alister Taylor Publications, Wellington, 1972. Paperback, 128 pages, 133 photographs. Price \$2.95. Reviewed by Tom Hutchins.

"Food, clothing, dry shelter—what more does anybody need?", asks James K. Baxter in some of the introductory text. Well, for one thing, we need books like this! Here are 133 photographs of New Zealanders now, seen with immediacy, truthfulness and a human revelation that makes this one of the best books ever on ourselves as a distinct people. Ans Westra and her publisher Alister Taylor are to be congratulated on the content and style of this way of showing New Zealanders to themselves. It is new because its point of view is strongly on the side of the ordinary knock-about don't-hand-me-that-bulshit almost-broke Kiwi that most of us are anyway.

The page-size is only moderate, 7¼ by 6¾ inches. But the layout by Jule Einhorn is fresh and works well. The printing of the images seems a bit on the harsh side. But the book is more a functional bit of communication than a "fine arts" effort, and the pictures come across very well in spite of an occasional solid black in shadow areas. A few prints are reproduced with much greater contrast than the originals seen recently in the Barry Lett Galleries showing. For example, on page 31 the two small boys in the Greymouth beach store-front are almost solid black, as are the young couple on the coast at Ship's Cove on page 116. This print seemed tonally weak and too evenly balanced in its formal weighting in the original; but here it gains a compositional strength simply because of the graphic weight of the dark figures. And I find it helpful to know that the two small boys on page 31 are collecting crickets. If the picture is given this caption in the book, why wasn't it given this title in the original showing? Does this reflect two ways of regarding the picture—a functional photojournalistic (as here in the book), and a "fine arts" one as in the gallery? Is there any difference, and should there be any difference? And on the matter of captions, does it really help to know that a face about an inch high on the side of a small print 4½ by 3½ inches on page 78 is Don Binney, the painter, when the more important participant in the picture is un-named? And if Barry Crump, the writer, is identified

in another small picture on page 23 why isn't the professional actress looming up in the whole-page picture on page 21? She should be identified as such, especially when her expression of prominent nose and mouth (and the whole setting of dress and jewelry of both women) might force a connotation on the image which is not valid? One might read this image as having some social criticism that would not be justified by the actual event and persons. This also comes up in the picture on page 17 of the small perky man. He is well-known to many people who might buy the book as a pesty, persistent, almost cranky agitator of the extreme-right in local protest politics. Maybe it would be best to be consistent with identifying people or not. Added significance can be given by full clues in captions; and misleading connotations added by too-cryptic captions can also be the other error. Some pictures seem to come from the same events, but they are scattered through the book. This weakens the factuality of the whole reading. A contrary example, where explicit linking in a series adds to the strength of all images is seen in the three Anzac Day pictures. The same could have been done with the scattered shots from Trentham Races. But there are some wonderful pages, such as 50 and 51,

with the selection of faces of various types of Wellingtonians watching a beauty contest, and the old pot-bellied West Coaster on the facing page. Page 83 has a section of a crowd at an Upper Hutt Queen's Festival with a young couple, he a powerful, benign young Maori, with a living yet monumental presence in a remarkable New Zealand image. In different style, there are about twelve pictures featuring young Maori men, mostly with Afro hair styles. A sad, disturbing, and memorable picture is on page 39 of one of these young men sitting on a porch at Ratana Pa, with a girl companion slumped on an old sofa, with a reflection of a chapel romanticised as a reflection in the window beside them.

There are too many good pictures to mention. The best thing to do is to buy the book, two copies, and put one away to let people see in fifty years' time what we really look like now. This book is full of humanity, and it's from our own people and our own times. James K. Baxter's pessimism may be answered in these people shown here. He writes in his introductory pieces: "When I think of my country, I think of a cloud of pain that presses down on the spirits of her people. She has not yet come to understand herself. Perhaps some of the young, in their heavy tribulations may be able to become her eyes..."

Ans Westra shows us the common humanity we share. If we get used to seeing ourselves through eyes like hers, maybe we'll come to understand this country we all live in.

Tom Hutchins

**A Retrospective exhibition of Ans Westra's photography is on display at the Dowse Art Gallery in Lower Hutt until February 11, and will later tour other centres. It's well worth seeing. Little more can be said about the photographs than has been said in this and last issue's reviews. Ans Westra has beautifully printed all the photographs especially for the exhibition. They're large prints, nicely mounted on black painted hardboard, and for sale at \$27.50 each. Even if you can't afford to buy any of them they're well worth seeing: the strength of these large original prints is almost unbelievable if previously you've only seen her work reproduced in books, good as it is even on the printed page.**

Bruce Weatherall

**THE HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY by Beaumont Newhall. 216 pages; 210 illustrations. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1972. Paperbound edition \$8.95. Reviewed by John B. Turner.**

It is encouraging to see at long last a handsome medium priced paperbound edition of *The History of Photography* by Beaumont Newhall. The fourth revision since 1937, this slightly enlarged edition will be invaluable as a standard text for many years to come. The famous historian and teacher combines classical scholarship with lyrical prose which itself seems influenced by the clean clear sensual beauty of fine photographs.

With great economy Beaumont Newhall covers the prehistory of photography, "The Elusive Image", in a few pages. His "is a history of the medium, rather than the technique, seen through the eyes of those who over the years have struggled to master it, to understand it, and to mold it to their vision." He deals with the technology of photography only in so far as it affects the photographer. Significant trends and developments in the medium are covered in the work of major photographers such as Hill and Adamson, Cameron, Atget, Emerson, Steiglitz, Strand, Weston, Ray, Moholy-Nagy, Adams, Lange, Walker Evans, Cartier-Bresson, Brandt, Smith and Minor White. Chapter

headings include "The Conquest of Action"; "Pictorial Effect"; "The Faithful Witness"; "Photography as an Art"; "Straight Photography"; "Documentary"; "Instant Vision"; "For the Printed Page"; "In Colour" (four pages, no illustrations, three photographers mentioned: Porter, Haas, Elisofon); and "Recent Trends". Newhall's picture sense is superlative. Karsh, for instance, gets a mention but doesn't rate picture space. Adam Clark Vroman, unknown until recently, is represented by two superb images of American Indians.

The emphasis is unashamedly on American photographers who without doubt have led the world more often than not. Newhall has set the highest standard of scholarship; it is up to those who follow to prove that photographers not included are in fact worthy of mention. There seem to be few likely candidates; perhaps Desire Charnay, William Notman, Josef Sudek and Helmut Gernsheim who readily come to mind. Certainly it is up to us and other "foreigners" to prove that our pioneer photographers such as Dr A. C. Barker, Alfred H. Burton and the Tyree brothers are as good in international company as we like to think, not to mention our contemporary photographers. They might be. (Newhall included the Australian pioneer Henry Beaufroy Merlin—are we getting warm?) In any event it will require dedication and scholarship worthy of Beaumont and Nancy Newhall to find out.

*The History of Photography* ends about 1958 with pictures by Robert Frank and Harry Callahan. In conclusion Newhall enthuses over the progress being made in the acceptance of photography as a valid, vital and needful art form. (Without mentioning, even modestly, that a great deal of the progress is due to his and his wife's work in the medium.)

"More and more," he writes, "are turning to photography as a medium of expression as well as communication. The leavening of esthetic approaches which we have noted continues. While it is too soon to define the characteristic of the photographic style of today, one common denominator, rooted in tradition, seems in the ascendancy: the direct use of the camera for what it can do best and that is the revelation, interpretation and discovery of the world of man and nature. The greatest challenge to the photographer is to express the inner significance through the outward form."

*The History of Photography*, sub-titled *From 1839 to the Present Day*, is printed in fine gravure. The reproductions, all in black and white (the colour frontispiece photo by Edward Weston in earlier editions has been unceremoniously dropped) are very good, but not quite so rich as those in the clothbound edition. The fine Strand, Weston and Adams photographs in particular, have suffered a lot in the reprint. Nevertheless, it's one of the books every keen photographer should have.

John B. Turner

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## BACK NUMBERS

Most back numbers of *New Zealand Photography* and its predecessor *Photographic Art & History* are still available at 25c a copy or \$1 for four or more from New Zealand Photography, 29 Wyndrum Avenue, Lower Hutt. The main features in these issues are:

- No. 2. Historical: The missing Daguerreotypes; Early Hastings Photographs; The Maori in Focus exhibition; Photographer of the Kauri-Tudor Collins; Hill & Adamson Calotypes in Dunedin. Contemporary: Photographs by Mac Miller and John Daley.
- No. 4. Historical: The "Nineteenth Century New Zealand Photographs" exhibition; The History of Photography exhibition at the Otago Museum; Early Auckland photographer J. N. Crombie. Contemporary: "Photography, A Visual Dialect" reviewed.
- No. 5. Historical: A Colenso Daguerreotype and other photographs from the Hawke's Bay Art Gallery & Museum; Photographs by G. Leslie Adkins; Two camera collections. Contemporary: Photographs by Keri McCleary; Hamilton's "Photography 71" exhibition; Bernie Hill Obituary; W. Eugene Smith Book Review.
- No. 6. Historical: J. W. Chapman-Taylor Photographs; Contemporary: The BALM Awards; Photographs by Alan Kolnik, John Fields, Do Van Toan. Book Review: Bruce Davidson's "East 100th St."
- No. 7. Historical: Hardwicke Knight's "Photography in New Zealand" reviewed; Photography a Century Ago—D. L. Mundy; More on J. N. Crombie. Contemporary: Photographs by Gary Baigent and Ken Foster; Books, "Cartier-Bresson's France" and "A Land Apart; the Mount Cook Alpine Region" reviewed.
- No. 8. Historical: Photographs by James McDonald. Contemporary: Photographs by Richard Collins, Allan Leatherby; The Nude—Photographs by Roger Leach, reviews of E. J. Belloco's "Storyville Portraits" and Bill Jay's "Views on Nudes"; Books You Probably Couldn't Buy for Christmas.
- No. 9. Historical: A. Mundy Album. Contemporary: Photographs by Keri McCleary, Max Oettli, Cave photographs by Lloyd Homer; "New Photography USA" exhibition preview.
- No. 10. Contemporary: Photographs by Simon Buis, Walter Logeman, Mike Hammersley, Allan McDonald; The BALM awards; reviews of the Bill Brandt exhibition, Newhall's "Airborne Camera" and Victor Keppler's autobiography.
- No. 11. Historical: The Earliest Landscapes. Contemporary: Photographs by Clive Stone, Jim Payne, John Milnes and Harry Foster. Two "Life Library of Photography" books reviewed.
- No. 12. Ans Westra's new book. Photographs at the Barry Lett Gallery. Photographs at the Universities Arts Festival.

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## NEWS & NOTES

### A NEW AUSTRALIAN MAGAZINE

We'd like to bring to readers' attention an Australian magazine which started publication this year. *Camera Graphics Australia* should appeal to many of our own readers. It's about as progressive, not to say radical, a photographic magazine as we're likely to see in this part of the world; in some ways it's perhaps a little more "Way out" than *New Zealand Photography* in spite of a spattering of A.R.P.S's among its contributors and some superfluous "how-to-do-it" articles amongst its many interesting photographic features. It comes out six times a year and costs 60c a copy or \$3.80 for six issues—we'd suggest you add a little more for postage if you're writing from New Zealand.

The address is: Camera Graphics, 123 Blues Point Road, McMahon's Point, Sydney, N.S.W. 2060, Australia.

### EXHIBITION CALENDAR

AUCKLAND. City Art Gallery: *New Photography U.S.A* (New York Museum of Modern Art) Tentative schedule for February 1973. See preview *New Zealand Photography* March-April 1972. *Three New Zealand Photographers* (Richard Collins, Gary Baigent and John Fields is now scheduled for July 1973 and will probably open in Wellington in February 1973.

LOWER HUTT. Dowse Art Gallery. Ans Westra retrospective: November 24 1972-February 11 1973.

### ART GALLERY BOOKSHOP ART GALLERY BOOKSHOP

A wide range of illustrated and photographic books is always on display at our Art Gallery Bookshop at the Auckland City Art Gallery, Kitchener Street, Auckland 1.

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