

1970 - 1975

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS AND RESTORATION

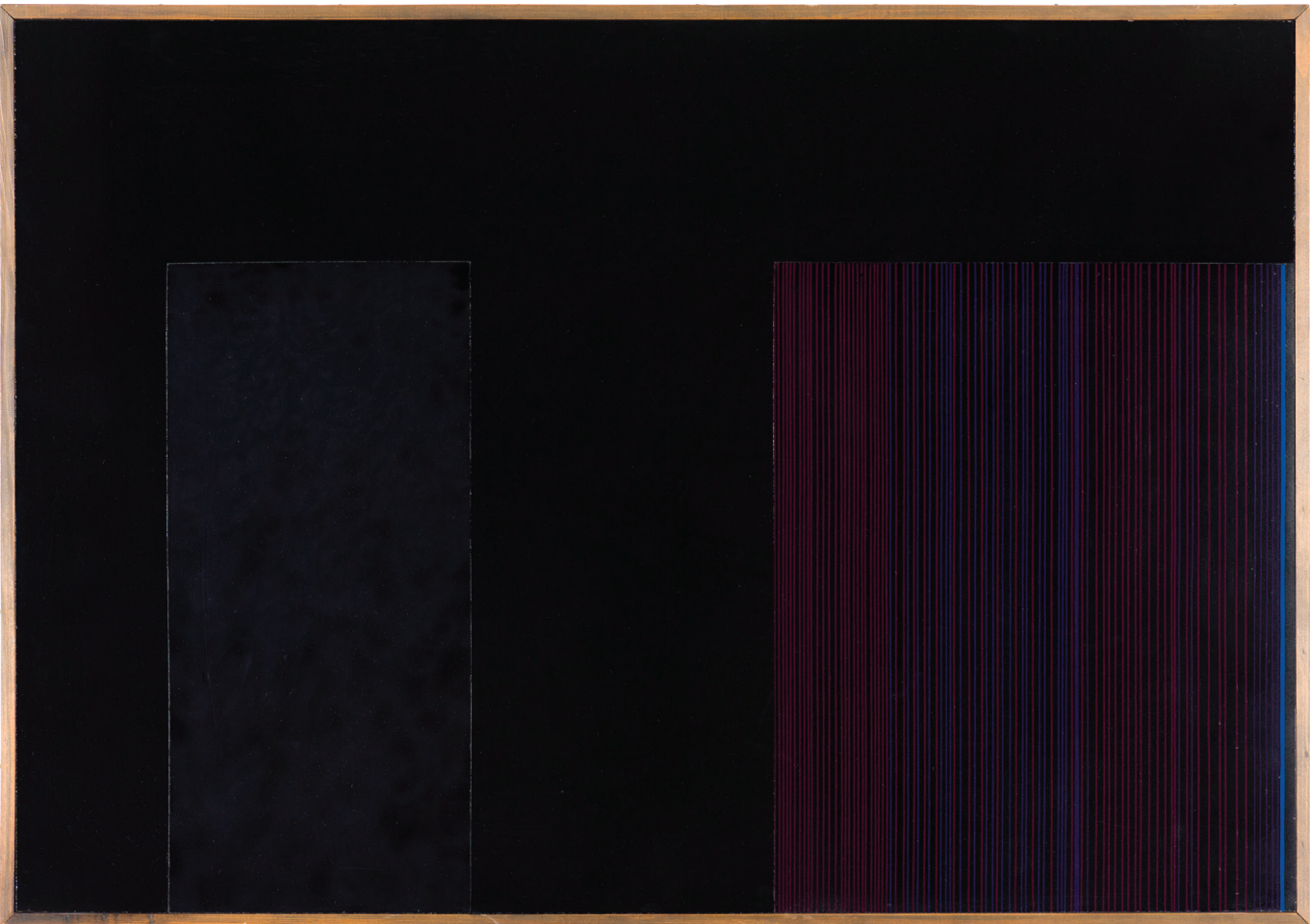


Figure 34. Ralph Hotere, *Requiem*, 1973, lacquer on board, 746 x 1075mm (collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, by permission of the Hotere Foundation Trust).

Hard edge abstraction was beginning to make itself visible, not by staff, but by some prominent ex students. The School launched two new full-time programmes into the New Zealand art education scene, Fine Arts Conservation and the Ceramics Certificate, and the Con Hutton Scholarship was announced.

In 1970 the School reached its centennial year and celebrations were on the minds of many. Stuart Scott, member of the Otago Polytechnic Council, Chairman of the Centennial Committee and a strong supporter of the School, announced on 22 September that "All preparations are in hand for the Vice-Regal Reception and Centennial Exhibition opening on Friday 26th September, the Centennial Dinner on Saturday 26th and the Exhibition and *Conversazione* at the School on Saturday and Sunday 26th and 27th September. All sub Committees have functioned extremely well and their work in most cases is almost complete. Total receipts to date are \$2050 and it is expected to pay all expenses, including the cost of presentation to the Dunedin Art Gallery and emerge with a surplus."¹

Over 300 attended the Friday evening Reception and Centennial Exhibition opening at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, where eight rooms had been cleared to house about 400 works by 50 of the most prominent artists and sculptors who had been staff or students of the School. The art had been sourced and selected by the Gallery Director Mr D. Charlton Edgar, and the Keeper of Pictures at the Hocken Library, Mr O. G. Cox.²

The opening address was given by the Governor-General, Sir Arthur Porritt, who presented a brief history of the School and praised the Dunedin settlers' initiative in establishing it, saying, "Dunedin was not New Zealand's first settled city, but it certainly gave a lead in the arts, when you consider that at that period its people had every reason to be fully occupied in the more mundane tasks of building up a new town, making new homes, and establishing new lives. All the more credit therefore to our pioneer forefathers for their perceptive sense of values. They – both men and women who lived in those rugged days – were early concerned to see that the cultural heritage of the lands they had left was established in the new country of their adoption. We tonight must be duly grateful that amongst their first priorities in maintaining a quality of life in their somewhat primitive surroundings, they decided that a School of Art should have an important place."³

The Centennial Dinner, held at Northern Oaks the following evening included in its menu, aperitifs, entrées, mains, sweets and wines (Penfolds, red and white) and addresses were given by Messrs W. M. Sheet, Chairman of the Queen Elizabeth Arts Council, W. J. Reed, current Course Supervisor of the School, T. Hill, Chairman of the Otago Polytechnic Council and A. D. Dick, M.P. and Parliamentary Under Secretary.

The only address reported was that of Mr Dick, who commented that "The first step forward into the new century of the Otago School of Art would be the appointment of a head of the art department at Otago Polytechnic." The next step, he said, would be "... that this department could name its own governing body. This would give the Otago School of Art greater autonomy and improved status. There was also a need for more workshops and facilities and more students, particularly those prepared to stay on into the second and third years. Although there were 22 first year students, it was a matter of concern that there were only eight second year students. (The School did have around 500 part-time students attending at this time.) If the School could set its sights on an annual intake of 25, with a high percentage passing out at the end of the third year, the School could have a case to qualify as a school of art offering a degree course similar to Auckland and Christchurch."⁴ Two grand pianos were on hand, and a musical interlude was provided by piano duo, Sandra Dingwall, music teacher, and Ian Grey-Smith, an ex-student, music teacher and established potter.

At the end of the evening a scholarship was announced by Alan Hutton, grandson of David Con Hutton, and endowed by Alan, then living in Christchurch, but who had until recently been a Dunedin resident. The scholarship was for \$100.00 annually to assist a student to attend the School and would be known as the Con Hutton Scholarship. It would be a further year and a half, 10 July 1972, before the specially instituted 'Con Hutton Selection Committee' held its first meeting, and during this period, through the generous additional sponsorship of Mr Daniel Moir, owner of the Dunedin picture framing and art supply shop, Abernethy's and Sons Ltd, the value of the award was seriously increased, thus enabling selected students to further their studies overseas.⁵

Concurrent centennial activities included an exhibition of work by David Con Hutton being held in the tea

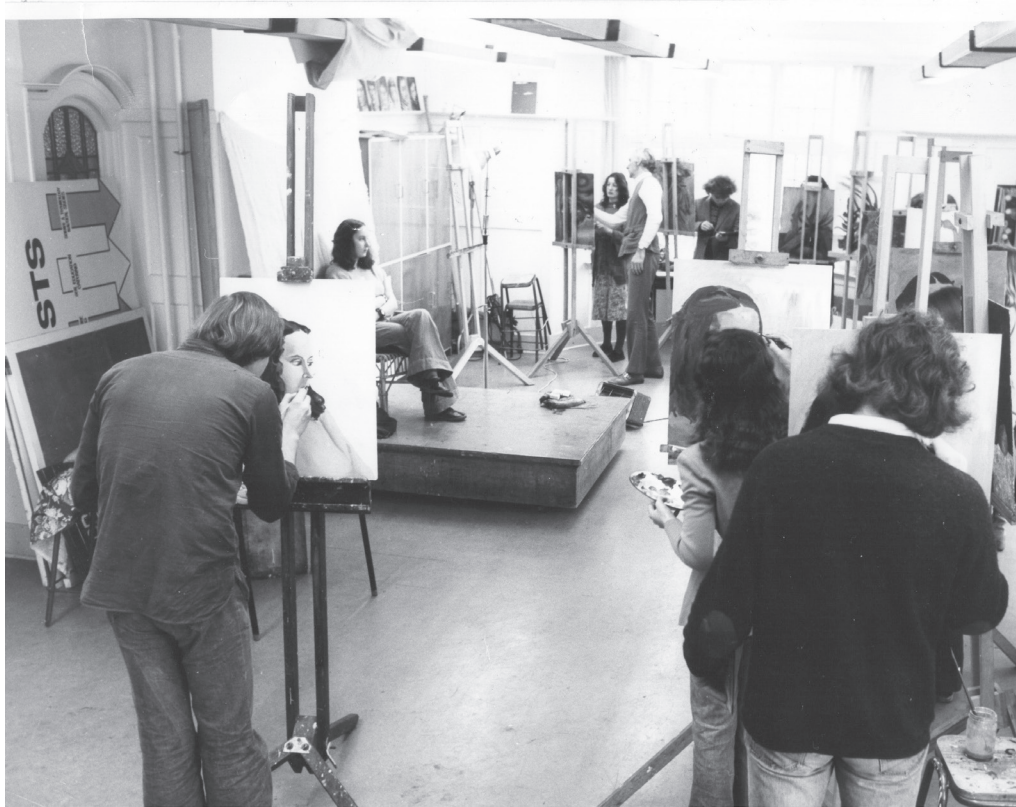


Figure 35. Roy Dickison supervising a portrait painting class, c.1974.

rooms of Arthur Barnett Ltd; an exhibition of contemporary work celebrating the School's Centenary was presented in the Princes Street branch of the ANZ Bank; the Otago Savings Bank displayed an exhibition of work from the Savings Bank Award competitions; and the School of Art held open days for the public to view a display of current students' work.⁶

Though the centennial celebrations had been a great success, the School was not yet out of the woods, as during these celebrations, Stuart Scott had the opportunity to talk to Dr Lee, then Director of Technical Education, who said "... that in his opinion the Otago Polytechnic School of Fine and Applied Arts had very little *raison d'être*; that its ability to train secondary school teachers was in question and that (the recently granted) permission along these lines had been granted accidentally and out of the kindness of the Department's heart rather than as a matter of propriety and that unless the School allied itself to industry, with teaching or with some other field which presented a proper demand for graduates, that it had no future at all!"⁷ Scott reported this conversation to the Polytechnic Council with the rider that he acknowledged, "It is a fact that for the past several years the School has lacked the strong leadership which is necessary for the success of any school or organisation."⁸

Lee's comments resulted in considerable discussion as to how the School might improve its national profile and gain better recognition for its Diploma in Fine and Applied Arts, with the outcome that Dickison was granted permission, at the time of his appointment, to visit Wellington and Christchurch to inspect their tertiary art programmes, and seek advice. In Wellington he spoke to Mr Nelson, Director of Education, who said he would like to see some development of the course related to the 'Gross National Product'. Mr Barrett, National

Advisor of Arts and Crafts, thought that teaching as a career should not be overstressed, and Mr Ramage, Acting Head of the Wellington Polytechnic School of Design, provided some helpful material on Theory Examinations, assessment of student work, internal organisation and liaison with industry. In Christchurch he spoke to Mr Roy of the Secondary School Inspectorate who was uncertain, but promised to look into how the School's students might fit into the Teachers' College pattern, and to Professor John Simpson, Head of the Canterbury University School of Fine Arts, who offered to provide a copy of the Otago Polytechnic School of Art Prospectus to applicants they were unable to accept due to lack of space.⁹

A recent survey at the time of the School's full-time students indicated that approximately half wished to enter teaching on completion of their diploma, which would include an additional two years of training at a teachers college, and the other half intended to pursue their art as either full-time artists or as hobbyists. The Department of Education clearly did not see either of these outcomes as adding to the Gross National Product.¹⁰

Due to an increasing demand for classes in pottery, the Polytechnic agreed to the School appointing a full-time tutor in the subject, now retitled 'Ceramics', which would eventually result in the introduction of the first full-time ceramics programme in New Zealand. The successful applicant, Lyall F. Hallum DFA, Dip Tchg, New Zealand born with recent experience in England and Canada, took up the position at the beginning of 1971. A number of new part-time staff were also appointed to cover a range of day and evening classes for which the School was currently responsible. These included; Ticket Writing and Commercial Art, Modern Embroidery, Embroidery for the City and Guilds Examinations, Fabric Printing, Weft Face Weaving, Clothing for TCB Examinations, Basic Jewellery, Floral Art, Visual Arts for Kindergarten Teacher Trainees, and Dressmaking classes for beginners and advanced students. In addition, all major subjects offered part-time classes in their respective fields.¹¹

In mid-1971 Scott, then Chair of the Polytechnic Council's Courses Committee, began corresponding with David Bridgeman-Sutton, Senior Lecturer in Marketing in the Department of Business Studies at the University of Otago, suggesting that their marketing students might benefit from attending some aspects of the School of Art programmes and in particular a proposed course titled 'Elements of Visual Presentation'. Bridgeman-Sutton showed interest in the proposal, but unfortunately others in his department proved "... less than enthusiastic about the idea."¹²

In a further bid to assist the School's rejuvenation, Scott organised a meeting of some forty local leaders in industry, commerce and the arts to discuss the School's direction and development. "The object of this meeting is to ask for your assistance and your ideas as to how this school can be developed to meet the needs, as you know them, of the community." Mr Murchie, Head of the Art and General Department of the Polytechnic, in which the School then resided, also spoke, saying that "... there was no ceramics course in New Zealand, no full course in interior decoration and no course in museum administration. The School could provide scope for these," and warned against the School being regarded in merely economic terms, saying, "There will always be a place for art – It's not totally utilitarian. It will not conform to that which over the past year some academics have been pleased to call Muldoonism." Three courses were eventually proposed; Architectural Presentation, which would include Architectural Modelling and Commercial Design, Colour and Design in the Environment, which would include the training of personnel in the knowledge of furnishings and materials, and a Graphics Consultant course providing instruction in the creation of visual images for institutions and organisations.¹³ This was a serious, but unsuccessful attempt to nudge the School's programme towards the industrial design field, as none of these proposals reached fruition, possibly due to the knowledge that the Wellington and Auckland schools more than met the required number of designers for industry.

The nearest related course to be established, was that of Fine Arts Conservation, the possibility of which was first discussed in late 1971 when Les Lloyd, Director of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery who had trained in England and Europe in Fine Arts Conservation, approached Stuart Scott with the possibility of establishing a Conservation Programme at the Gallery in conjunction with the School of Art. Scott approved of the idea and

wrote to the Principal of the Polytechnic, saying that, "... there was no other person in New Zealand equipped to provide this training and consequently, Fine Arts Conservators must either be trained in Dunedin or brought into the country from overseas. Mr Lloyd states, and Mr Dickison confirms, that there is substantial demand from art galleries throughout New Zealand for people trained in this field, and that; in fact, there are for example nine vacancies in this field in Auckland alone at the present time. Mr Dickison is of the view that this one year course could be added to the present three year course as an honours year. As far as I can see, this course will enhance the work and standing of the School of Art considerably and place no further strain whatever upon the teaching staff or resources of the Polytechnic."¹⁴

The Council agreed to the programme's establishment, and it commenced in February 1972 with the admission of four of the School's third-year students. Its primary purpose was stated as being "... care for the collection at the Gallery, not only in the interests of posterity, but also to enable the works to be seen in the best possible condition."¹⁵ The course eventually became a three year programme with terms approximating that of the University. The first year consisted of conservation and mounting of prints and drawings, and media and damage identification and sterilization. The second year included photography, conservation of oil paintings, research projects and the use of scientific equipment, and the third year covered advanced restoration methods, chromatography; ultra-violet, infrared and X-rays, and sculpture conservation. Students also attended the School of Art one day per week for History and Theory of Art and Life Drawing. In addition to their studies and gallery work, students were encouraged to restore items of relatives and friends, from which any pecuniary return would be the sole gain of the student.¹⁶ By the late 1970s, annual grants for students attending the course came from the Department of Internal Affairs and student selection was made from applicants from throughout New Zealand and overseas.¹⁷

Ceramics, as a subject, was now gaining considerable momentum. In a memo to the Council from Murchie and Dickison dated 26 February 1972, they commented that the Polytechnic was the only tertiary institution in the country offering training in ceramics, and recommended that it was time they promoted the programme nationally by assisting a staff member to visit craft potters, ceramics companies and fellow tertiary institutions throughout the country.

The Council approved their proposal, and Lyall Hallum was allocated a travel grant, resulting in him spending 20 days from 30 April to 19 May travelling throughout New Zealand, during which time he visited 33 individuals and institutions for the purpose of promoting the Ceramics Section. This included 21 potters, 7 commercial ceramics businesses, 4 educational institutions and the QEII Arts Council. On his return, he reported that not one person spoken to was aware of the existence of ceramics at the Polytechnic and that most potters visited spoke of young people contacting them with requests to be apprentices or asking about available courses. One person, Yvonne Rust, who was running a small private school for potters in Wellington, supported by the Arts Council, said that she had been contacted by 40 prospective students in one year. Hallum recommended that the Polytechnic consider establishing a national advertising campaign for the School, and Ceramics in particular, and that students be recruited on a national, rather than on a provincial basis.¹⁸ Council members discussed his report at their 27 June meeting, and were quoted in the local newspaper, as agreeing that "... students should be recruited on a national basis ... and that promotional means be investigated."¹⁹ This decision proved a major boon to the School in later years through it becoming acceptable to forward annually, copies of the School's prospectus to every secondary school in New Zealand, resulting in greatly increased application numbers and enhanced student selection.

The School received an unexpected visit in May 1972 from Mr G. Nees, Director of the Industrial Design Council, who appeared to be working on the assumption that Malcolm Murchie, then Head of the Polytechnic department within which the School resided, was the head of the School, and that the School of Art was working towards becoming a School of Design, which no doubt contributed to his less than favourable report: "The Course, which is geared primarily to the production of secondary school art teachers, is too disintegrated



Figure 36. William J. Reed, 1972 (photo courtesy of the Hocken Collection).

and lacks a sense of direction. Painting and sculpture in particular are taught with a much too conservative and pedestrian bias. The school is itself cramped into a number of small buildings isolated from each other, some of which provide very poor working conditions.”²⁰

His recommendations included, that “the present Head of Department should be replaced, preferably by a person with experience and interest in art and design education. The School is apparently the worst housed in the Polytechnic, and should be given prior consideration in rebuilding plans. Painting and sculpture in their present form should be reduced, and design with an industrial, environmental and quality of life orientation promoted. Staff should undergo retraining and be encouraged - perhaps required initially - to attend art education refresher courses regularly. Students should be encouraged to consider the School their major environment during the course, and should be allowed to work there outside teaching hours. Finance should be provided for additional equipment; mainly in art history and ceramics. The kiln at present in use is built into a domestic fireplace and chimney, and is an obvious fire hazard.”²¹

His only positive comment being, “I consider the art history and liberal studies requirements to be fully justified. The tutor in charge [Raymond Ward] is doing an extremely good job.” And concluded by saying, “It must however be emphasised that although two of the proposed specialisations [Ceramics and Fine Arts Conservation] appear to have relevance for the School, their implementation should not substitute for basic reorganisation of the



Figure 37. Roy J Dickison, 1970s (photo courtesy of the Hocken Collection).

existing course. If this were done, within the next triennium, the School would be well on the way towards equivalence of other design schools, and consequent improvement of its public image.”²²

Prior to the report’s arrival in February 1973, some eleven months after Nees’ visit, a number of his recommendations had already been enacted. The most notable was the introduction of Basic Design to the curriculum, with Tom A. Field, DFA, a member of the New Zealand Print Council who had been a graphic designer for CHTV3 and WNTV1 and then lecturing in Graphic Design at Hamilton Teachers’ College, being appointed full-time to teach the subject, along with John R. L. Fletcher, B.Sc., Dip Tchg.

This was the only inspection ever made by the Design Council, as over the following years the School continued to maintain and strengthen its ‘fine arts’ protocol.

With student numbers continually increasing, the demand for additional accommodation was ongoing. A specialist room was provided for Design, new accommodation for Sculpture was approved, resulting in two new classrooms with an outside covered area for stone sculpture being erected on a site in York Place, and tenders had been called for

the construction of a new suite of buildings in York Place to house Ceramics. Equipment upgrades were also in evidence with a grant from the Education Department of \$4,458 having been received towards the establishment of the new Sculpture block, \$4,969 had been approved for the purchase of new ceramics equipment, including an out-door 50 cubic foot oil fired kiln, and Design being allocated a setting up grant of \$5,270.²³

In July 1973 Dickison reported that “Since the Triennial Inspection much thought has been devoted to ways to improve the situation within the School.” An important outcome of which was that approval had been sought from and granted by the Polytechnic Council to modify the third year programme to allow third year students who had previously been required to sit in two major subjects, to specialise in one subject only, chosen from Painting, Graphics, Sculpture, Ceramics and the new subject, Art Conservation, which would help enhance their professional level and specialist knowledge. Also, the first room of the new Ceramics block had been completed and five students had been accepted into a full-time pilot Ceramics programme, an equipment grant of \$3,496 had been approved for the Graphics section, and consideration was being given to students having access to the School outside of teaching hours.²⁴

This year also saw the announcement of the first presentation of the Con Hutton Scholarship award. The successful candidate was Geoffrey D. Logan, a final year student who had also been tutoring part-time ceramics classes. “Mr Logan had been officially accepted by the North Staffordshire Polytechnic and has already found accommodation there. He plans to leave Dunedin on Sunday 19 August.”²⁵

In late 1973 the School was granted Council approval to upgrade the Ceramics pilot programme to a one year full-time Ceramics Certificate, which began in February 1974 with an intake of 18 students. This was the

brainchild of Lyall Hallum who announced that “The Course attempts to introduce a broad range of Ceramics experiences, to establish foundation skills and to give to students a sound technical and aesthetic base on which to build. Students are required to attend regularly all classes, and are encouraged to continue their work beyond formal class hours. Studio work (25 hours per week) with Practical Assignments will also include short lectures and demonstrations by staff and visiting potters. Basic Design classes (three hours per week) throughout the year are intended to extend the students’ ability to think in three dimensional terms, to be able to record these ideas, and to have some experience of handling materials other than clay. There will be short block courses in Geology, Chemistry and Ceramics History.”²⁶ Basic Design was taught by two members of the School’s staff, Tom Field and John Fletcher. Visiting tutors included potters Denys Hadfield, Christopher Vine and Michael Trumic. Geology was taught by John Stinton and lectures in Ceramics History were presented by Linden Cowell of the Dunedin Museum. The proposed Chemistry tutorials did not eventuate.

The course had hardly begun when Hallum resigned and left for Canada in May 1974 and Michael Trumic (1926-2012) who had been teaching part-time at the School, was appointed to fill Hallum’s position. Trumic had been introduced to pottery by Yvonne Rust, had owned the Several Arts Gallery in Christchurch and had his own established pottery. In addition, he had considerable teaching experience, having taught young enthusiasts at his pottery, students at the local Teachers’ College, and members of various pottery groups up and down the country. He had worked with Hamada, had met Kawai, and his ceramic style evidenced a Japanese aesthetic. It was he who developed the course which, through his dedication and enthusiasm would become recognised as the national training ground for prospective potters throughout the country. At the end of the year a well-received public exhibition presenting the work of the sixteen students who had completed the course went on display in the Connoisseur Gallery and, not surprisingly, the current Ceramics studio was already proving inadequate to the demand and two more were under commission.

1974 also saw the retirement of Bill Reed, the School’s Drawing and Painting tutor since 1945 who moved to Invercargill where he continued to paint and exhibit landscapes “in intense, almost hallucinatory, colours that remind us of his interest in Surrealism,”²⁷ and taught classes part-time at Southland Polytechnic. He was replaced by English born, Bernard Holman (1941-1988), a graduate of Kingston upon Thames School of Art with a Diploma of Painting with Honours and who, prior to his appointment, had been teaching art in England. The School also appointed an ex-student, Chris De Jong DFAA, as its first technical assistant, who quickly found that his allocated number of hours per week were quite inadequate to cover the demands of all staff.

By 1975 the School was re-establishing itself as a place worthy of consideration by prospective students. The York Place Ceramics block had been completed, and a Drawing Studio, an Art History lecture room and a Metal Sculpture workshop had all been installed in Haddon Place. The recommended entry criteria were now UE with a pass in Art and English, although those with a lesser qualification were considered if their folio presentations were of a sufficiently high standard, and student numbers had significantly improved. Stage one of the School’s Diploma in Fine and Applied Arts had three classes totalling 48 students, stage two, two classes with 31 students, stage three, one class of 11 students, Ceramics Certificate had a roll of 18 students, and three hundred plus students were attending the twenty part-time classes on offer.²⁸

1 Memo from Stuart Scott to Otago Polytechnic Council. 22 September 1970.

2 *Otago Daily Times*. 28 September 1970: 17.

3 *Evening Star*. 26 September 1970: 2.

4 *Ibid.* 28 September 1970: 8.

5 Minutes of the First Meeting of the Selection Committee for the David Con Hutton Memorial Scholarship. 10 July 1972.

6 *Otago Daily Times*. 17 September 1970: 15.

7 Paper to the Polytechnic Council from Stuart Scott. CC7/70. 10 November 1970. (Hocken. 88-002 box 8)

8 *Ibid.*

- 9 Roy Dickison Report to Council, The Future of the Otago Polytechnic School of Fine and Applied Arts. Paper CC9/70.
(Hocken. 88-022 box 8)
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Otago Polytechnic Prospectus. 1971.
- 12 Letter to S. Scott from D. Bridgeman-Sutton. 3 August 1971. (Hocken. 88-022 box 8)
- 13 *Otago Daily Times*. 14 July 1971: 10.
- 14 Letter from S. Scott to Mr Scollay, Principal of Otago Polytechnic. 3 November 1971. (Hocken. 88-022 box 8)
- 15 *Otago Daily Times*. 23 February 1972; 5
- 16 Outline of Conservation Course by Les Lloyd. December 1978.
- 17 *Otago Daily Times*. 2 June 1979.
- 18 Report to Council on Trip by Ceramics Tutor, April 30 - May 19, 1972.
- 19 *Otago Daily Times*. 28 June 1972: 10.
- 20 Triennial Inspection 1972 Otago Polytechnic School of Fine and Applied Arts. G. Nees, Director. New Zealand Industrial Design Council. 1 January 1973.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 1972 Equipment Requisitions, and R.J. Dickison's Annual Report on the School of Fine and Applied Arts - 1972. (Hocken. 88-022 box 8)
- 24 Report from the Head of Fine and Applied Arts. July 1973.
- 25 Thank you letter for financial assistance to T.E. Clark, Crown-Lynn Potteries from G. Mason, Otago Polytechnic Council Chairman. 21 June 1973. (Hocken. 88-022 box 8)
- 26 Ceramics 1 Year Full-Time Course. Hand-out sheet for prospective students, 1974.
- 27 Article by Richard Dingwall in the *Otago Daily Times*. 6 April 1999: 16.
- 28 Record of Student Attendance Document 1967-1980. J. Tomlin. 18 April 1980.

