

Pre-1870

PROLOGUE – PRE-HISTORY



Figure 2. John Buchanan, *Milford Sound*, 1863, watercolour, 220 x 502 mm (image courtesy of the Hocken Collection).

Portraiture and Romantic Topographical Art were the main areas of European art prior to the colonisation of New Zealand. The Royal Academy encouraged portraiture, and many early explorers carried natural history draftsmen on their boats to record newly discovered lands. Early immigrants and visitors to New Zealand were also prolific recorders of the landscape.

The instigation and promotion of public art and design education on a national scale in Britain was largely due to the perseverance and dedication of one man, the historical painter, Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786-1846). He was the son of a printer, publisher and bookseller, educated at grammar schools in Plymouth and Plympton, and after a brief and unsuccessful apprenticeship to his father, entered the Royal Academy in London at the age of eighteen.¹ In his introduction to Haydon's autobiography, Aldous Huxley describes him as having "...a masterful and magnetic personality, was so large, so exuberantly vital, so intelligent and plausible, such a good critic of all art but his own, so well read, such an entertaining talker, that it was impossible not to take fire at his ardour."²

Between 1823 and 1836 he made several petitions and presentations to Parliament along with badgering numerous politicians and Prime Minister Lord Melbourne in particular. All related to one or both of the following; on the importance of Government funding public art, and on the Government's duty to contribute towards educating Britain's youth in art and design.

His first petition to Parliament, made in 1823, promoted both the necessity of design in manufacture, and sponsorship by the government of public art. In reference to design in industry, he said, "...in addition to the benefits which have always accrued to every nation by which the arts have been successfully protected, the improvements of its manufactures cannot be denied nor overlooked."³ He also requested that the Government makes grants available to purchase historical paintings to be hung in churches and public buildings, which would help those artists, such as himself "...who devoted their lives to such honourable pursuits...from ending their days in prison and in disgrace."⁴ He wrote this while in King's Bench prison where he was spending one of several short periods for being unable to pay his debts. However, he was fortunate in having a number of wealthy patrons, including Sir George Beaumont, Lord Mulgrave, Keats and Sir Walter Scott who all helped him financially at such times.

In 1830 he further petitioned Parliament, again from prison, repeating the above message, but also commenting on the lack of provision for cultivating the taste for art in students at the two London Universities. He used France as a comparison where the fine arts were regarded as the equal of literature and philosophy, saying that: "No moderate vote of money would be more popular with the educated middle classes, than such a vote for such purposes."⁵ This appears to be the first public statement made in Britain regarding the introduction of fine arts as part of an educational curriculum. Unfortunately, the presenter of Haydon's petition, Mr Agar Ellis, said at the time of his presentation that though the petition came from a person of great merit in his profession, he could not recommend a grant for the purpose advocated. Haydon was not amused.

A fortuitous opportunity arose for Haydon in 1832 when he was commissioned to paint the portraits of the attendees at the Liberal Party 'Reform Banquet' at Guild Hall, and as the leading members of the Party sat for him, he made the most of the opportunity to harangue each in turn about the need for state assistance of the visual arts and design.⁶

On February 8th 1835, at the London Mechanics' Institute, Haydon presented his first of many public lectures on art. In his conclusion he said, "If by my efforts I can advance your taste, or refine your feelings for Higher Art... If I can rekindle the lost feeling for its national importance, or prove its immense value to manufacturers, one of the great objects of my life will be realised. But, remember, nothing will, nothing can be effectually of use till schools of design be established in the great towns."⁷ This was one of twelve lectures which were eventually published as a volume in 1884.

Haydon and Lord Melbourne, at that time Prime Minister, were close friends and had numerous lively discussions on a range of topics, including the merits of art being publicly funded. Haydon commented on many of these in his diaries:

November 28th, 1834. Lord Melbourne said he had talked to several artists about a vote of money, and they had all said it had better "be left alone." "Who," said I, "portrait painters in opulence? Callcot (R.A.) after

dinner at Lord Holland's has corrupted you, sneered you out of your right feelings over your wine." Lord Melbourne acknowledged there was a great deal of truth in this, and laughed heartily.⁸

February 1st, 1835. Called on Lord Melbourne. He was looking over the 'Edinburgh Review.' He began instantly, "Why, here are a set of fellows who want public money for scientific purposes, as well as you, for painting! They are a set of ragamuffins."⁹

September 24th, 1835. Called on Lord Melbourne. I was very glad to see him, and he me. We had a regular set-to about art. I said, "For twenty-five years I have been at all the Lords of the Treasury without effect. The first lord who has courage to establish a system for the public encouragement of high art will be remembered with gratitude by the English people." He said, "What d'ye want? £2000 a-year! Ah," said Lord Melbourne, shaking his head and looking with arch eyes, "God help the minister that meddles with art." "Why my Lord?" Lord Melbourne replied, "He will get the whole academy on his back."¹⁰

October 19th, 1835. Called on Lord Melbourne. "Do you admit the necessity of State support?" "I do not," said he, "there is private patronage enough for all that is requisite." "That I deny," I replied, at which he rubbed his hands, and said, "Ha, Ha!... Where has art ever flourished?" "In Greece, Egypt and Italy." "How, by individual patronage?" "No my Lord; by the support of the State alone." "Has it flourished in any country without state support?" "No. Then how can you expect it to flourish in this?" He did not reply. ... "Why is France superior in manufactures? Because at Lyons, by State support, she educates her youth to design."¹¹

The most influential supporter of Haydon's ideas was George Rennie (1802-1860), sculptor and M.P. for Ipswich, a Scotsman brought up on a farm in Phantassie, East Lothian and, incidentally, the founding father of the 'New Edinburgh' settlement in New Zealand.¹² Because of his importance to the establishment of the Otago colony and his advocacy for the arts in Britain, it is worth commenting further on his activities. McLintock, in his *History of Otago*, says of Rennie, that like his father George Rennie (1749 -1828), he became a "...practical agriculturist of high standing and revealed in his brilliant diversity by studying architecture and sculpture in Rome, with such success that from 1828 to 1837 he became a recognised exhibitor at the Royal Academy...and on his return to London [from Rome] he devoted his unquestioned organising abilities towards improving the standards and teaching of art throughout Great Britain and, with this in mind, turned his attention to politics in 1836."¹³

In Rennie's biography¹⁴ he is acknowledged as the person who recommended to Sir William Ewart, M.P. and Junior Lord of the Treasury, that a parliamentary committee be established to investigate the use of Government funding to advance British arts and manufacture. The result of his suggestion was the establishment in July 1835, under the chairmanship of Ewart, of "A Select Committee appointed to inquire into the best means of extending a knowledge of the Arts, and Principals of Design among the People (especially of the Manufacturing Population) of the Country; also to inquire into the constitution, management and effects of Institutions connected with the Arts."¹⁵

The committee met for almost a year, interviewing many witnesses, including:...

27th July. Dr Friedrich Waagen, Director of the Royal Gallery in Berlin. "Schools of Design are free in Prussia and sponsored by the state. ... Student selection is based on aptitude only, they are not selected by social class."¹⁶

31st July. Samuel Smith, when commenting on why British manufactures use foreign designs, said, "I attribute it principally to the want of artists and schools of design in England. In this country the manufactures have no means of obtaining designs excepting by copies from the French for the most part."¹⁷

3rd August. John Howell. "I have never found a good designer in England." and admitted to keeping fifty-year-old French patterns for manufacturers to use.¹⁸

17th August. George Rennie. "I have long regretted the deficiencies in knowledge of design so visible in English manufactures." When asked how this might be improved, he answered, "I should say general instruction which may be comprehended under museums and schools;" and mentioned that a society for the encouragement of design education had been in existence in Edinburgh for many years. "Would you think it desirable to have a species of central and normal school for teaching those persons who are to teach others in different parts of the country?" "Yes." Rennie made it clear that he believed provincial design schools should be given the opportunity to develop their own character, and that the task of a central school should be to provide encouragement without absolute control. He also used this opportunity to advocate that museums and art galleries should be open and free to the public.¹⁹

21st August. John Skene, Secretary to the Board of Trustees for the Encouragement of Manufactures in Scotland. When asked how the Board had encouraged the arts and design in Scotland, replied that "...the Board had established and continued to maintain a school of drawing (the Trustees' Academy in Edinburgh) for almost seventy years. A Frenchman, De la Croix, was employed as master and its forty students were admitted free. All received instruction in art and design." The students "...are principally engravers, and statuaries, also artists, coach painters, house painters, and manufacturers; persons of that kind." He was highly complimentary of the Edinburgh Academy, saying that it "...has produced the most eminent men either as artists, engravers, or as connected with any of the corresponding professions, in fact, it has done a world of good for the country." He also recommended that drawing from the round be introduced into all academies.²⁰

Although the Trustee's Academy had been established in 1760, the first organised art school in Scotland was the Foulis Academy of Fine Arts, which was founded by the book publisher, Robert Foulis in 1753, and located in a library hall of Glasgow College, now Glasgow University. It predated the Royal Academy in England by fifteen years, but experienced ongoing financial difficulties due to its insistence on the provision of free tuition, and with the gradual withdrawal of benefactors, the Foulis Academy was forced to close after twenty two years of existence.²¹

Haydon was one of the last to be called, testifying on 28 June, 1836. His contempt for the Royal Academy was well known, which he believed was run by the privileged for the privileged, and when asked, "What do you disapprove of the RA?" replied, "its exclusiveness, its total injustice... The holy inquisition was controlled by the pope, but these men are an inquisition without a pope."

The Royal Academy, which was founded in December 1768 for the purpose of cultivating and improving the arts of painting, sculpture and architecture, had by this time become an exclusive gentlemen's club, promoting its members only and the training of young privileged gentlemen in the fine art of painting.

When asked how he would improve the taste of the people, Haydon said "I would suggest the extension of the school of the RA; I would make it a great central school, and I would have branch schools in all the main towns." "Do you think if drawing was made a part of elementary instruction, the public taste would improve?" "Yes; it might be made as much a part of elementary instruction as writing ... the taste of the people and the capacity of judging would be immensely increased." He also advocated that design schools be quite separate from other schools, that professors of painting be appointed to universities, and that the Government grant funds annually for painted works to decorate public buildings as they had been doing for sculptured statues.²²

The Committee concluded its deliberations in August 1836, and much to Haydon's delight, recommended that in order to promote training in art, along with public appreciation of art, a Normal School of Design be established in London, that Provincial Schools be established in centres of manufacture and that museums and art galleries be formed and be assisted by government grants.²³ Haydon wrote in his diary in January the following year, "I find after thirty-three years' struggle, the state of Art certainly with a better prospect; the Academy completely exposed; the people getting more enlightened; a School of Design begun; and I more than hope the House of



THE UPPER HALL OF THE LIBRARY.

Used by the Foulis Academy of the Fine Arts.

Details of this Hall are given by William Adam in *Vitruvius Scoticus* Edinburgh [1750] folio.

Figure 3. The first organised art school in Scotland, The Foulis Academy at the Glasgow College, 1753, engraving by David Allan, c.1760 (image courtesy of Glasgow City Council, Mitchell Library).

Lords will be adorned with pictures.”²⁴ But, to Haydon’s disappointment, it was decreed that the School of Design would concentrate on the teaching of ornamental design only, and not include life drawing, which he considered essential if students were to learn how to accurately observe and develop their ability to capture and present complex visual images.

The first Normal School of Design was established in 1837 in Somerset House, Aldwych. Mr J. B. Papworth was appointed Principal and the School catered for seventeen pupils in its first year. As an aside, it’s interesting to note that female students, generally from the middle and lower middle classes, were protected from the male lower class artisans by being required to leave the school in the evenings before the male students were released.²⁵ Haydon visited the School shortly after it opened and was concerned to find a very narrow curriculum, which encouraged an exaggerated mechanical finish, instead of the broader principals of drawing, including drawing from the live model, which he had been advocating. He discussed his concern with many friends, including George Rennie, who, by now, had become a strong parliamentary advocate for the arts and who was also concerned over the School’s limited and unimaginative curriculum.²⁶ Haydon’s answer was to establish his own school of design in Leicester Square supported by Ewart and others, which “...provided

lectures in anatomy, design, colour, and classes for drawing from the antique and from a fine female model.²⁷ It rapidly reached maximum occupancy and its popularity forced the Government School, in an effort to compete, to add life drawing to its curriculum. In 1839 Haydon closed his school having achieved what he had set out to do, that of successfully demonstrating, in his opinion, how a school of design should be run.²⁸

Throughout 1839 Haydon travelled the country from Edinburgh to London. He visited wealthy manufacturers and lectured mechanic groups, promoting the merits of each major town establishing its own school of design and pointing out that British manufacturers would soon be driven out of the world markets if there were no designers being trained to support their products.²⁹ Though he was both ardent and often vociferous in his promotion of the arts, he was also a realist over the time it might take for Britain to establish itself as a country known for quality design products. "I may not live to see it, but if the mechanics of this country will only master the principals of art, before fifty years are over we should be far beyond the foreigner."³⁰

During the following decade, several provincial schools of design were established, although it was not until 1842 that the first, the Manchester School of Design, which had been in existence since October 1838, was officially recognised,³¹ and by 1852, some six years after Haydon's death, the number had grown to twenty three.

When the Great Exhibition was held in Hyde Park in 1851 it became apparent that Britain was still lagging behind other countries in the design of their manufactured goods. In an attempt to further rectify this situation the Board of Trade established the Department of Practical Art in 1852, to be renamed a year later, the Department of Science and Art, which was required to establish and promote these subjects in elementary schools.³² Henry Cole was appointed to head this institution, and held the position for twenty years. He also became responsible for the schools of design, including what had now become known as the Central School of Design located in Somerset House, and later renamed the Royal College of Art. It was Cole's intention that provincial schools of design should concern themselves only with elementary drawing, while the Central School would train students to become teachers of art. This was an original concept, as up to this point it was accepted that all schools of design should limit their teaching to drawing and ornamental design, aimed at training artisans to be designers for industry.

The duties of these newly trained art masters were firstly; to visit the national and public elementary day schools to instruct teachers in elementary drawing; secondly, to supervise instruction given in London schools by art masters-in-training, and thirdly, to prepare teaching manuals and drawing examples for copying.³³ All of which, some seventeen years later, would be emulated by David Con Hutton in New Zealand.

By 1853, training in drawing had become a requirement of all programmes for pupil-teachers and students in training colleges, and the Department of Science and Art was given the task of establishing appropriate examinations. However, it was not until 1884, some twelve years after its instigation in Dunedin, New Zealand, that drawing became a compulsory subject in all elementary schools throughout Britain. At this level the curriculum consisted largely of linear geometry and perspective, drawing simple outlines from a flat copy, copying simple geometric shapes, copying the outline of the human figure and animals, and copying flowers from an outline and colouring them in.³⁴ A stultifying programme, and unfortunately, not too dissimilar to that initially promoted by Hutton.

From 1857, the art teaching programme established by the Department of Science and Art, located in South Kensington, became commonly known as the South Kensington System. Its prescription was largely modelled on the German system, promoting what was considered useful knowledge appropriate to artisans and teachers, such as ornamental and mechanical drawing, as opposed to the more liberal French and Italian systems, which included life drawing, and encouraged the development of young artists as well as artisan designers.

Meanwhile, on the far side of the world in Otago, New Zealand, a young colony, which had been established in 1848, conceived by George Rennie in 1842, whose portrait by French artist Francois Theodore Rochard hangs

to this day in the Dunedin Council Chambers, determinedly followed Britain's educational footsteps. Rennie had recommended that the first public buildings to be erected in this New Edinburgh should be a school and a church.³⁵ A building was eventually completed in September 1848, six months after the arrival of the first settlers. It became known as Beach School due to it being located at the bottom of Manse Street some thirty to forty yards back from the beach where today the Dowling Steet Car Park now stands, and was regarded as the community's most important structure. It was used as a school during the week, as a church on the Sabbath and as a centre for public meetings in the evenings. "Suitable doors and windows had been brought from Home. It was an oblong weather-boarded building, with a door in the end, and three fair-sized windows with ordinary panes on each side. It was roofed with shingles, and its walls painted white outside. It was capable of holding about 200 people."³⁶ The school was under the guidance of a qualified teacher, James Blackie, who had been brought out from Scotland for that purpose, and the ministry was under the pastoral care of the Reverend Thomas Burns.

A number of private schools were also established, one of the earliest being a school for girls run by Mrs Bond, who advertised her 'Female School' on the front page of 18 August, 1849, *Otago News*. Even at this early stage of the settlement's development, drawing was an accepted syllabus subject as evidenced in the following advertisement by another provider: "Private Tuition. Messrs' Carter wishes to receive a limited number of Young Gentlemen. ... For Board and Education on the principle of Religious, Moral and Intellectual Training. The course of study embraces, Latin, Greek, the Mathematics, the theory of Book-Keeping, Natural Philosophy, Agricultural Chemistry, Drawing, and the usual branches of a polite and useful education."³⁷

The Otago Provincial Council, which had been elected in 1853, passed a number of resolutions on 18 December, 1854, the first of which read, "That it is the opinion of this house that provision should be made from the public funds of the Province, or by assessment, for providing a liberal education to the whole children of the Province as far as practicable."³⁸ These resolutions laid the foundations of public education within the Province, including the establishment of an Education Board, a Grammar School, and the provision of funds for the passage of appropriately qualified teachers from Scotland who would be paid from one to three hundred pounds per annum, depending upon their position.³⁹

And on 14th March 1856, the Council passed an Education Ordinance, establishing the Otago Education Board and educational districts, each with its own inspector and a School Committee, which would be responsible for teacher accommodation, the erection and maintenance of school houses, the provision of appropriate equipment, and all matters pertaining to the general management of their schools.⁴⁰ Otago now had a formalised, provincial educational system, the first to be established in New Zealand.

1 *The Dictionary of Art*. Vol.14. Edited by Jane Turner. (Macmillan Publishers Ltd. 1996), 261-262.

2 Haydon, Benjamin R. *Autobiography and Memoir*, Vols. I & II, Edited from his Journals by Tom Taylor. With an introduction by Aldous Huxley. (Peter Davis, London. 1926) xi.

3 *Ibid.* Vol. I: 334.

4 *Ibid.*: 336.

5 *Ibid.* Vol.2: 488.

6 *Ibid.* 525.

7 Haydon, Benjamin R. *Correspondence And Table Talk; With A Memoir By His Son, Frederic Wordsworth Haydon*. Vols. I & II. (Chatto And Windus, Piccadilly, 1876) Vol. I: 193.

8 *Ibid.* Vol.2: 391.

9 *Ibid.*

10 *Ibid.*: 388.

11 *bid.*: 389.

12 Rennie, George. "Letter to the New Zealand Company". *Colonial Gazette*, 1842: 514.

- 13 McLintock, A. H. *History Of Otago*. (Otago Centennial Publications, 1949) 158.
- 14 *Dictionary Of National Biography* Vol. XVI. Editor; Lee Sidney. (Smith, Elder & Co. 1909) 903.
- 15 House of Commons Sessional Papers, 1835, Vol. V. *Report From The Select Committee on Arts and Manufacture*, (Sessional No 585) 376.
- 16 *Ibid. Minutes of Evidence*: 1.
- 17 *Ibid.*: 21.
- 18 *Ibid.*: 30.
- 19 *Ibid.*: 67.
- 20 *Ibid.*: 77.
- 21 Caw, James. *Scottish Painting Past and Present. 1620 - 1908*. (T. C. & E. C. Jack. Edinburgh. 1908) 34.
- 22 House of Commons Sessional Papers 1836, Vol. IX. *Report of the Select Committee on Arts and Manufacture*. (Sessional No 568) *Minutes of Evidence*: 86-97.
- 23 House of Commons Sessional Papers 1836, Vol. IX. *Report of the Select Committee on Arts and Manufacture*. iii-xi.
- 24 Haydon, Benjamin R. *Autobiography and Memoirs*. Vol. 1: 622.
- 25 Macdonald, Stuart. *The History and Philosophy of Art Education*. (University of London Press 1970) 144.
- 26 Haydon. *Autobiography and Memoirs*. Vol. 11. Op. cit.: 620.
- 27 Macdonald. Op. cit.: 81.
- 28 Haydon. *Correspondence and Table Talk*. Vol. 1. Op. cit.: 198.
- 29 *Ibid.*: 203.
- 30 *Ibid.*: 398.
- 31 Macdonald. Op. cit.: 84 - 85.
- 32 Middleton, N. and Weitzman, S. *A Place For Everyone*. (Victor Gollancz, London 1976) 207.
- 33 *Ibid.*: 160.
- 34 *Ibid.*: 167.
- 35 *Colonial Gazette*, 17 August 1842: 514.
- 36 Chisholm, Rev. James. *Fifty Years Syne*. (J. Wilkie and Co. 1898) 74.
- 37 *Otago Witness*. 8 February 1851: 1.
- 38 Letter to the editor reporting on proceedings of the Provincial Council during its last session. *Otago Witness*, 5 April, 1856: 3.
- 39 Votes and Proceedings of the Provincial Council of Otago, 1875, Session 2: 89.
- 40 Ordinances of the Provincial Council of Otago, Session 4, *Education Ordinance*, 14 March 1856.