



*Charles Blomfield. Mud Flat, Rotomahana. 1885 Oil on canvas, 35.5 x 61cm. Collection of Maurice Lennard, Auckland*

tisements in the newspapers advised that 'Tourists and Visitors to Auckland are especially invited to view the collection'.<sup>14</sup> Within this studio-shop, the terrace replicas functioned as up-market versions of the photographic views that were avidly collected by tourists long after the eruption had transformed Rotomahana. The huge editions of the photographs and the endlessly cloned oil paintings together played a part in constructing that particularly potent New Zealand folk myth: the Legend of the Lost Terraces.

Buried under the weight of the replicas, the 'original' terrace pictures of 1885 need to be appreciated for their contribution to a plein-air tradition in which Blomfield was an important pioneer. At a time when virtually all pictures intended for exhibition were painted within a comfortable studio, Blomfield undertook arduous trips burdened with all the materials he needed to produce oil paintings on the spot. When exhibited, these paintings had 'from Nature' proudly appended to the titles. In this sense the true successors to the terrace 'originals' are not the replicas, but rather the melancholy series of oil sketches of post-eruption Rotomahana Blomfield made under difficult circumstances in October 1886, four months after the cataclysm. In these extraordinary views he carefully documented the radically altered landscape, choosing vantage points as close as possible to those of the earlier terrace series.<sup>15</sup> And back in Auckland, some of these views in turn became replicas within the 'Gallery of New Zealand Art'.