

own landscape. In a few years one did come whose current popularity was great enough to suggest he might be the answer. He was an Englishman, with the fascinating and beautiful name of Lamorna Birch. His visit should have been like a visit by the Archbishop of York or Canterbury might have been to the Anglican Church. But something went wrong. It began to be said that our subjects didn't suit him. Was it that he was too English for us, though we were trying to be as English as we could out here? If he had been French would it have been different? (Hugh Scott had wished for 'a great *European* artist'.) Was English not sufficiently representative of a whole continent whose past contained painters of many countries—Dutch, Italian, Spanish, German, French—that the English had traditionally admired more than their own? Whatever the fact, the failure of Lamorna Birch's visit made it look as though New Zealand might have to try to find its own way after all.

At Christchurch in 1931, where Hugh Scott had advised me to go to further my studies beyond his capacity to teach me, I found, again, English-type painting. The senior teachers at the Canterbury School of Art were all practising painters, perhaps more than half of them English born. The way of painting there was sober indeed, excitement taboo, academic virtues taking four years to acquire with a diploma of fine arts the reward of every faithful and obedient student who stayed the course. I found that I had to know nothing, to be taught without alloy all that they knew there. I knew I could never get enough money to stay the course, so I contented myself with not wanting a diploma. It would lead to teaching and I didn't want to do that, not if it meant teaching what I would have to learn to get it. With less freedom than I had enjoyed at Nelson I began to wilt. Here, my watercolours done outside classes got no approbation, except from one or two fellow students who liked them. To paint at all, apart from being taught, seemed slightly illicit. If one did, to show the result felt almost like indecent exposure.

This went on for me until November, when the 1931 Group Show appeared in the old Durham Street Art Gallery. There I saw painting that excited me, and I was unashamed of being excited. It excited me in the way the Sisley and the Cézanne had, in Arthur Mee's *Children's Encyclopedia* in 1923. But I didn't remember that yet, I only knew I had found my way. I had no decision to weigh or choice to make: either this painting or the School of Art was irrelevant, and it was the School of Art. I made up my mind immediately to go to Dunedin next year, where one of the two principal exhibitors, Robert Field, lived. He taught there, at the King Edward Technical College. At the first sight of his work I had