

THE
ARCHITECT
AND THE
ARTISTS
HACKSHAW
McCAHON
DIBBLE

The collaborative
projects 1965–1979

Bridget Hackshaw



**THE
ARCHITECT
AND THE
ARTISTS**

HACKSHAW
McCAHON
DIBBLE

'I've used people like McCahon, Dibble, artists who have made our buildings far more meaningful within our social context.'

— James Hackshaw

'Good glass holds your hands up high and a certain glory filters through your fingers.'

— Colin McCahon

'James had this overriding thing to work with New Zealand artists and craftsmen . . . And he got some lovely stuff out of it because of it.'

— Paul Dibble

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PART 1

Hackshaw, McCahon and Dibble



INTO THE LIGHT

Bridget Hackshaw

Mā whero, mā pango ka oti ai te mahi.
With red and black the work will be complete.

This book explores the creative collaboration between an architect, a painter and a sculptor. The work they did together spanned the years 1965 to 1979, a critical period in New Zealand's modern cultural history, and resulted in a dozen buildings. Most of the buildings were designed to serve diverse local communities, and, in three instances, families. However, much of the work from the collaboration has been virtually invisible and, in some cases, badly neglected. This might not be surprising nor warrant much attention were it not for the fact that the painter was Colin McCahon and the sculptor was Paul Dibble.

By his own account, the series of windows McCahon designed for these dozen buildings — eight churches and chapels, three private houses and one school block — were not only important in their own right but also critical to the development of his painting. Yet until now, McCahon's windows have been barely mentioned in the great mass of commentary and scholarship about his art. This book, and its accompanying documentary film, bring McCahon's unknown glass works into the light.

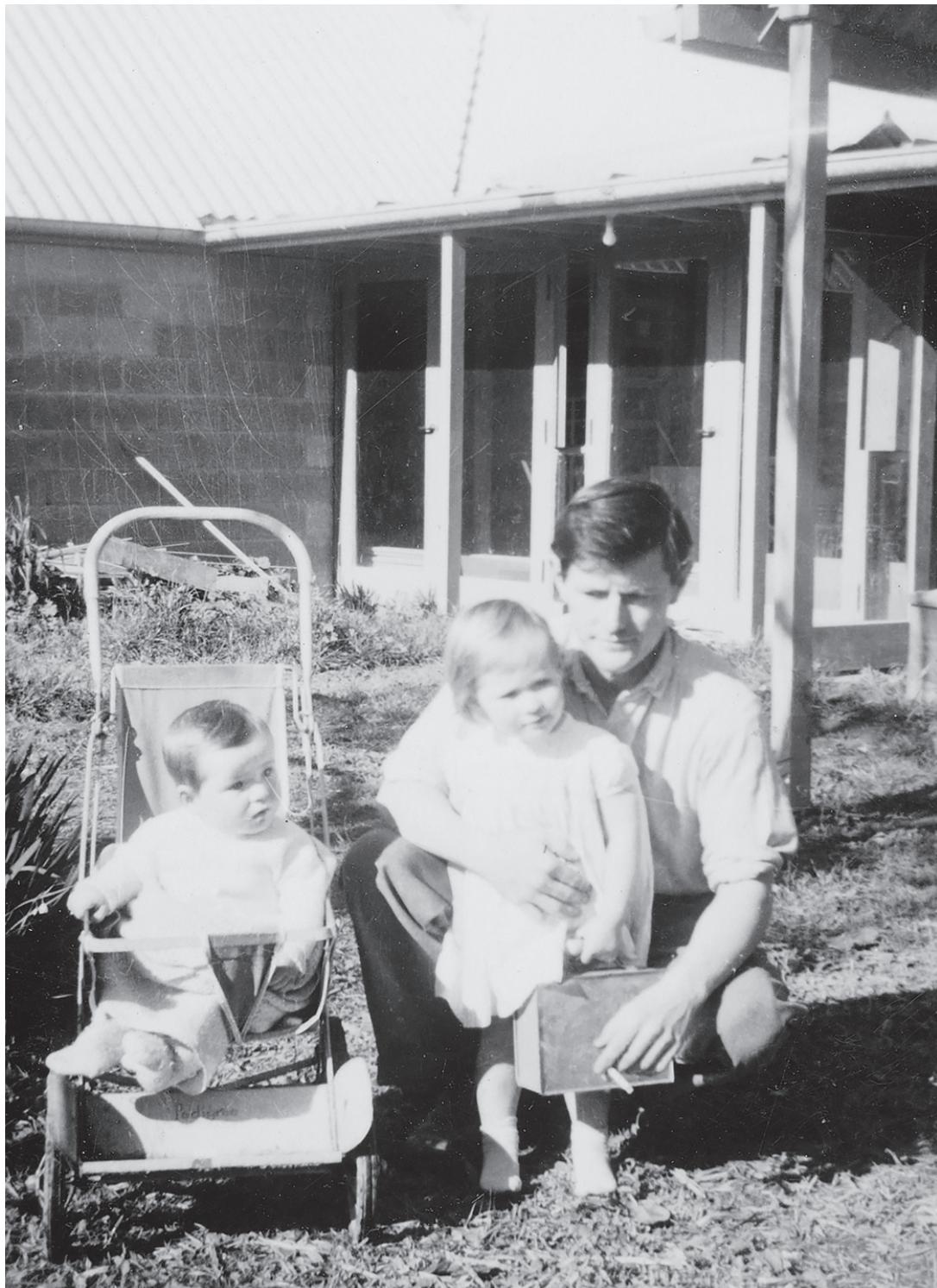
My part in telling this story began in 1999, the year my father, the architect James Hackshaw, died. We began our conversation when he was already quite ill, and we talked over several weeks. I took notes while he described in some detail the work he undertook with McCahon and Dibble across their 14 years of collaboration.

After my father died, I shelved the handwritten notes for a long time — I had young children and for me it wasn't the right moment. However, I must have known I would come back to this subject one day. I was interested in my father's legacy, but more than that, I was intrigued that this collaborative work had remained largely undocumented.

At the time of his death in 1987, McCahon was recognised as one of New Zealand's most influential modern artists and had a growing international reputation. Dibble's career had gained momentum since his collaborations with my father and McCahon, and by the 1980s his work was well represented in private and public collections. His *Southern Stand* New Zealand war memorial, unveiled in 2006 at Hyde Park Corner in London, cemented his international reputation.

I was puzzled that their work together remained hidden in plain sight in buildings dotted around suburban Auckland and appeared to arouse next to no curiosity.¹ My father gave a talk entitled 'McCahon and Church Architecture' at the Auckland City Art Gallery in 1989 in association with the *Gates and Journeys* exhibition.² He also spoke about his work with McCahon and Dibble as part of the *Fifties Show* in February 1993. Despite these two public talks, their collaboration faded from view, with one notable exception — the clerestory windows in the convent in Upland Road, Remuera.

McCahon's extraordinary windows in the convent chapel were removed in 1989. The small community of remaining nuns had sold the



Previous pages: Windows by Colin McCahon at St Ignatius Church, St Heliers, Auckland, photographed in 2021.
Bridget Hackshaw

Above: John, Bridget and James Hackshaw at the Hackshaws' first house on West Tamaki Road, Glen Innes, Auckland, in 1958. Hackshaw Family Collection

building with its extensive grounds and were moving to a house in Panmure. Sister Maria Park contacted the Auckland City Art Gallery and offered them the McCahon panels if they agreed to reglaze the clerestory. Years later, the conservation team at the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, under Principal Conservator Sarah Hillary and Objects Conservator Annette McKone, decided to conserve the East windows. This delicate process attracted a lot of professional interest.

As for the other collaborations between my father, McCahon and Dibble, if they have been mentioned at all in the past 20 years, it's been in fairly vague terms. In 2007, Professor Andrew Barrie from the University of Auckland School of Architecture and Planning wrote a leaflet called 'James Hackshaw's Public Buildings' in which he referred to Hackshaw's churches, chapels and schools, but not the private houses.³ Barrie's text was all I could find on record when I started trying to piece the story together as I knew it and venturing out with my camera to track down what remained of the collaborations.

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What drew me back to this body of work? Curiosity, certainly, but more a sense of the need for it to be added to the public record. I was unsure whether the next generation of our families would want to spend what turned out

to be years looking for the works and researching their stories. The cultural and religious references in the works do not hold the same meaning for this generation as they had for us when the works were made. The Catholic faith in particular is not part of their lived experience as it was mine as a child in the 1960s and 1970s.

Having been raised and educated by Catholics, I had some understanding of McCahon's religious symbolism. I knew some of the people involved in the story — including the Dibbles, Bishop Reginald Delargey, Peter Wood, the Gillmans and the Poole's, and had met McCahon — and I was familiar enough with the protagonists' work to attempt to document it. My father's drawings and photographs were in the archives of the University of Auckland School of Architecture. I could start there. So, in 2018 I began photographing and researching the buildings, windows and sculptures created by these three people, as well as the culturally rich and generous communities of people associated with them.

The story of the collaboration between Hackshaw, McCahon and Dibble began in 1965 with the Catholic Bishop of Auckland, Bishop Delargey, who was fresh back from three years in Rome attending the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, or Vatican II. The council had directed that there was to be full and active participation in the Mass by lay people and women, that Mass should be conducted in



James Hackshaw photographed by his wife, Freddie, at their house on West Tamaki Road, Auckland, in 1970.
Hackshaw Family Collection

English facing the congregation, that the Church was to be more open, and that collaboration with other religions was to be encouraged. Delargey had been exploring many of these ideas prior to Vatican II, and once he was back in Auckland he was excited to have the opportunity to implement them. Our family had a close relationship with the bishop and my father was conversant with Catholic ideas, and so, at age 38, he was engaged by Delargey to design a convent in Upland Road, Remuera. My father began looking around for collaborators.

This was not my father's first foray into church work. In 1963, he had designed the St Cuthbert's Church, a Presbyterian church in Browns Bay. The scale of the building was modest, but the secular abstract red and yellow windows, designed by artist Pat Hanly, were dramatic. The Upland Road chapel windows needed to reflect religious ideas, so it was important to find an artist who wanted to work in a religious language.

Architect Morton Jordan, who worked with my father, suggested that they approach his friend Colin McCahon. My father had designed a house in Marine Parade, Herne Bay, in the 1950s for McCahon's aunts, Eva and Sarah Ferrier, who were retired schoolteachers. McCahon had demonstrated his understanding of the liturgy and the symbols of the Christian Church in works such as *The Wake* (1958) and the *Elias* series (1959), and was very keen to do the work.

The Upland Road chapel and the church commissions that followed gave McCahon a chance to be 'working towards meaning, in a real situation', as he put it.⁴ McCahon's son William has stated that, in his work for the Church, his father 'was writing for an audience who knew and understood the Christian faith's visual symbols even though they might not understand the theory and theology'.⁵ It was work that gave McCahon deep satisfaction. 'I love these jobs — I can relax from painting and I'm working as I would as a useful member of society. I'm not alone any more.'⁶

My father was also looking for a sculptor who could make a bronze tabernacle and candlesticks for this first Catholic commission. He had already met several prominent sculptors. However, McCahon knew a talented sculptor among his students at the Elam School of Fine Arts and suggested that they meet him. Paul Dibble was just 22 at the time.

For Dibble, this was an opportunity not only to be a 'jobbing' artist but also to work with bronze, a notoriously expensive material. In addition, it gave him the opportunity to work on a large scale for the first time. He would end up casting not only the bronze works for Upland Road but also the subsequent church commissions at his Kakariki Avenue flat in the Auckland suburb of Mount Eden, or in the backyards of other houses he rented over the years. He and his flatmates would take turns to get up through the night to feed the fire in



James Hackshaw's photo of what he described as 'McCaheon hills' in the South Island. Hackshaw Family Collection

the makeshift foundries that he built. Although Dibble wasn't a Catholic, his Anglican upbringing meant he quickly understood the visual language involved. Over the course of the collaboration he made crucifixes, tabernacles, candlesticks, holy water fonts and candle snuffers. With his addition, the team was assembled.

In addition to the team of architect, painter and sculptor, was the craftsman builder Peter Wood.⁷ My father admired Wood enormously and he, like Dibble and McCahon, was a lifelong friend. McCahon was also pleased to work with Wood.⁸

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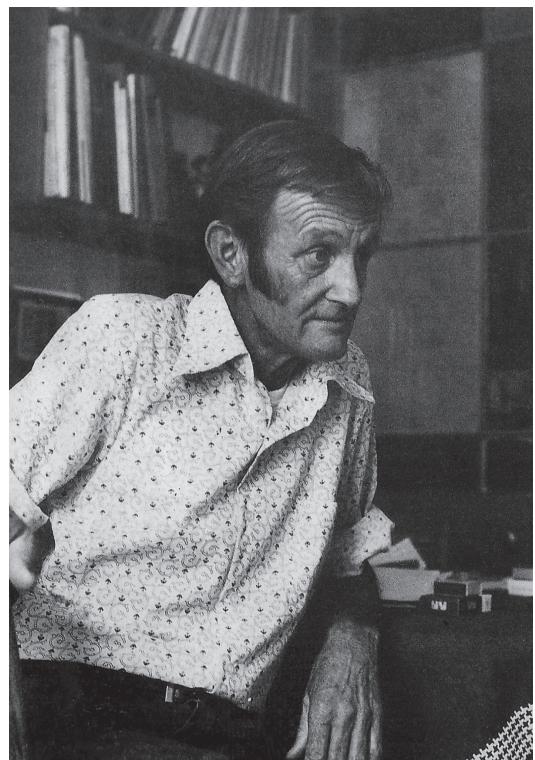
The Catholic Church has a long tradition of patronising artists, but it seems that the collaboration between my father, McCahon and Dibble resulted in a fresh understanding and urgency in what work was relevant to local communities for their spiritual spaces. Most artwork in New Zealand churches in the 1960s and 1970s was imported from Italy or Australia; the collaboration of these three men marked a break from this approach.

Church art had typically reflected a European aesthetic. Painted plaster statues of Jesus, Mary, Joseph and the saints were often realist, 'sentimental and colourful' renditions.⁹ Windows narrated biblical stories and honoured sacred figures, and Stations of the Cross graphically illustrated explicit moments on Christ's journey to Calvary.

In contrast, the materials and landscapes of this trio's works are ours. The window McCahon designed in 1969 for St Patrick's Church in Te Puke, for example, has the shape of a hill signifying Calvary carved out of coloured glass, but Te Puke means 'hill', and so for McCahon it was very much a local hill. My father used to point out what he called 'McCaheon hills' when we were driving, and often stopped to photograph them. Dibble commented on McCahon's extraordinary ability to take the local and make it international,¹⁰ and my father admired the way McCahon could express the local environment to make universal ideas relevant to local communities.¹¹

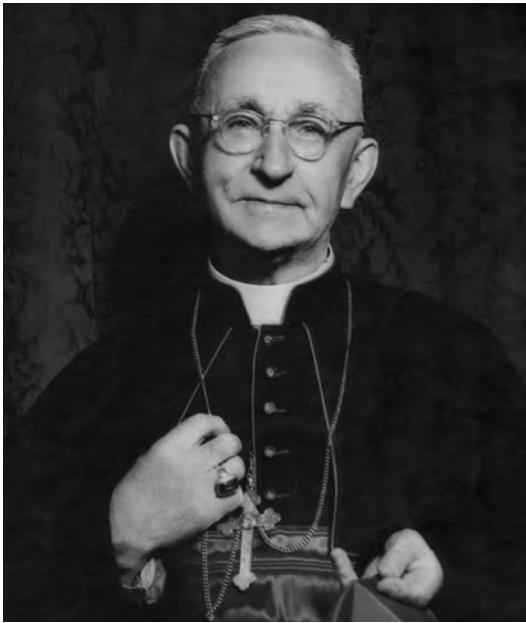
Dibble's tabernacle at St Francis de Sales Church on Auckland's North Shore has a relief image of Rangitoto Island on its side and its earthy bronze metal is more analogous to our landscape than the gold and silver more typically used in church altar objects. *The Way of the Cross*, painted by McCahon for the Upland Road convent, reflects the topography of Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland and uses symbols rather than human figures to tell the story of the road to the Crucifixion.

The furniture my father designed was fashioned from rich native kauri and heart rimu timbers, and was built by Averill Construction in Auckland. The local wood, simple design and



Above: Colin McCahon photographed in 1978.
Patricia Sarr

Below: Peter Wood building an extension to the Hackshaw House on West Tamaki Road, Auckland, in the mid-1960s. Hackshaw Family Collection



Above: Cardinal Reginald Delargey.
Catholic Diocese of Auckland

Below: Archbishop James Liston.
Catholic Diocese of Auckland

robust construction all express the origin of its manufacture here in New Zealand. The materials, colours and iconography used by my father, McCahon and Dibble can be said to deify our own heritage and landscape.

McCahon's response to the landscape was deeply spiritual. In 1966, the poet Charles Brasch wrote to the writer and art curator Hamish Keith, saying, 'I suppose one could say that landscape is the chief language of his [McCahon's] paintings; and of course, he is saying something about it that doesn't come only from the landscape itself . . . What he says about it is at the same time an interpretation of the state of man, the nature of our life on earth.'¹²

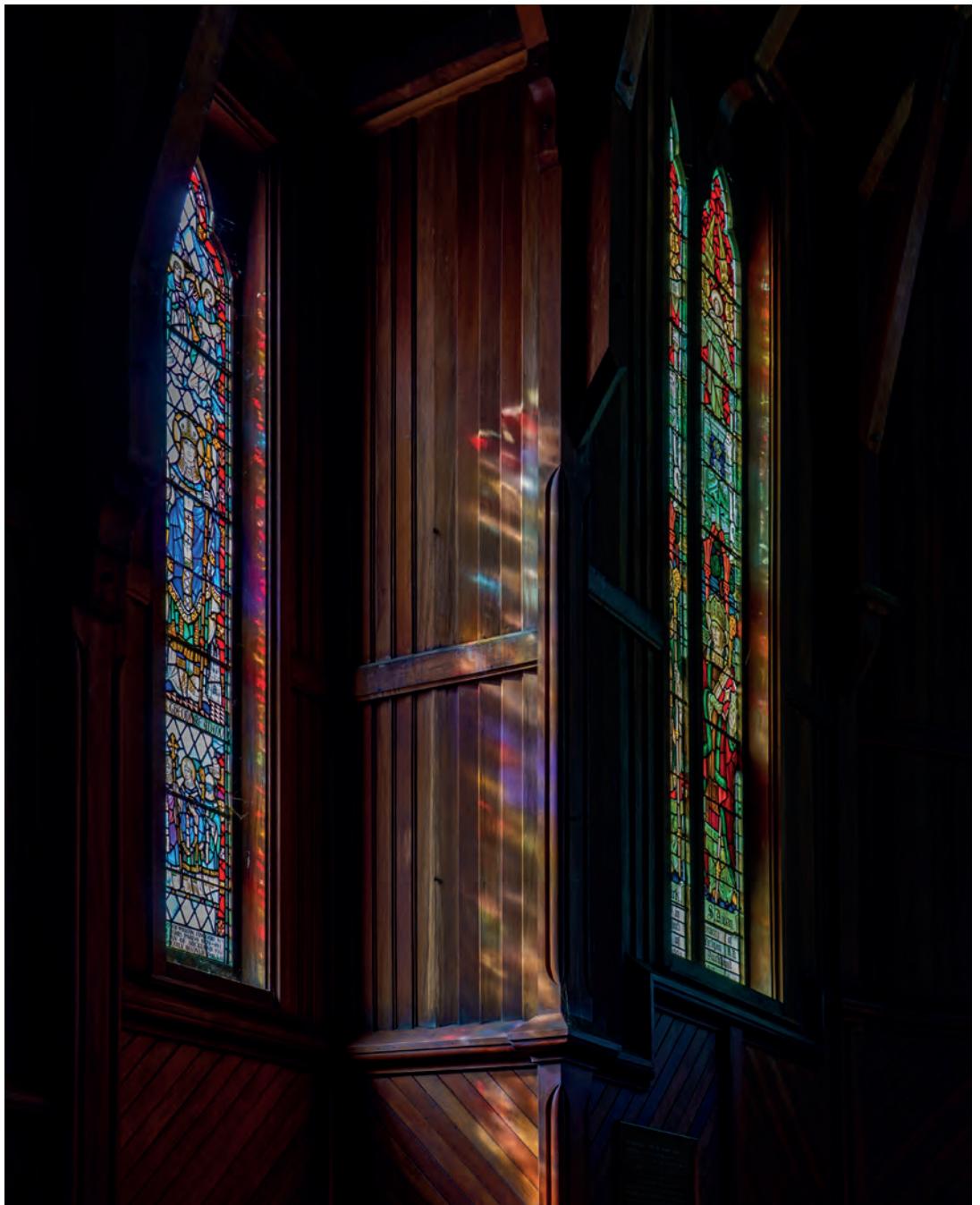
McCahon wrote something similar himself to the Wellington art dealer Peter McLeavey a few years later: 'I paint to tell people of the beauty of the land I love and of their relation to it and the God they all ask of for help.'¹³

• • •

It is intriguing that the Catholic Church in 1960s and 1970s New Zealand gave these three men such latitude to decide how to design churches and make their artworks. I have not been able to find any written directives to them from the bishops in the Catholic archives, despite much of church life being scrupulously organised through letters. My father designed buildings at 10 Catholic schools and nine churches, and it does seem that while budgets were largely determined by the Catholic Diocese of Auckland, decisions about the build and adornment were made at a local level. Maybe Delargey and his colleagues were devolving these kinds of creative decisions to local communities in the spirit of Vatican II.

A letter from McCahon to Christchurch City Librarian, collector and long-time supporter Ron O'Reilly in November 1969 documents one conversation he had with Archbishop James Liston when my father took Liston and Delargey to meet McCahon on site at Upland Road. At that meeting, Liston told McCahon that he disagreed with the order of the panels, but in the end McCahon was left to make up his own mind. McCahon thought that they had come to a good understanding following their discussion, and was surprised to learn much later that Liston was shocked by his work and had withdrawn from being involved, leaving it up to the more liberal Delargey to manage the project.¹⁴ Dibble recalls one attempt at resistance from the Church to a tabernacle that he had made, and my father saying, 'They don't know what the hell they want, just give it to me. Put it on this shelf, they'll love it.'¹⁵

Years later, both my father and McCahon acknowledged how open the sisters at Upland Road had been to their work. At his Auckland City Art Gallery talk in 1989, my father said, 'I'd like to



St Mary's-in-Holy Trinity, Parnell, Auckland, was one of the church interiors that inspired James Hackshaw.
Bridget Hackshaw



The Le Corbusier mural in the dining room at the Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris. Olivier Martin Gambier

thank all of the nuns, Mother Presentia and also various others I've worked with over the years with Colin . . . they really showed their complete trust in the both of us, allowing us to do the work in the way that we wanted to, and also the bishops who let us get on with what we were doing.¹⁶ Some time before, McCahon wrote that '[The] Mother Superior . . . regarded the whole enterprise with amazing sympathy. The young novices who came whispering in and out to look at the work in progress were very fine people.'¹⁷

...

My father's buildings fit gently into their suburban New Zealand settings. In Andrew Barrie's words, they were 'rational and efficient' structures fulfilling the need for low-cost new churches in rapidly expanding suburban areas.¹⁸ In other words, they were not the first places one would look for high art, although with hindsight I can see that my father had an enduring interest in using art to enhance buildings. He used to sit in St Mary's Anglican Church in Parnell, and also in St John the Evangelist Chapel in Meadowbank, admiring the glass, space and timber. Like McCahon, he thought that the Anglican St Margaret's Church in Taihape was magnificent; the furniture, the windows, the interior were 'a gem', he once said.¹⁹

My father was a member of Group Architects, described by Julia Gatley as New Zealand's most mythologised firm of mid-century

architects, known for their provocative calls for a specifically New Zealand architecture.²⁰ In 1952, aged 26 and midway through his 10-year career with the Group, he applied for a government bursary to study French and work at an architectural practice in Paris. Later, he said that he didn't do a lot of architecture that year, preferring instead to travel and spend time with sculptors and painters.

The main thing that impressed my father about France was the influence of art on architecture. He mentioned cathedrals enhanced by beautiful coloured glass and was particularly inspired by the windows in Sainte-Chapelle in Paris and Chapelle Notre-Dame du Haut in Ronchamp, which was designed by the Swiss-French architect, painter, writer and sculptor Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, better known as Le Corbusier. My father lived in the Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris, in one of the buildings designed by Le Corbusier, where a striking mural on an interior wall had been painted by the great man himself. My father realised that, without that mural, the building would have been less.

My father returned to New Zealand in 1954, but it wasn't until after he'd parted company with the Group in 1958 that he began his church work. His church designs carried on the basics of the Group's philosophy, which my mother, Frederika (Freddie) Hackshaw, summarised as the use of local natural materials, the avoidance of ostentation and foreign influences, using natural light, easy access to the

outside, and not hiding the basis of the structure. She highlighted the involvement of local artists in his church architecture, and designs which enabled the participation of the congregation in the ritual of the Mass.²¹

For McCahon, the church window work provided the context and structure to express his ideas on God, our lives, time and place. He saw the importance of making work for public places, and he went to enormous efforts to convey meaning as well as to fulfil the decorative purpose that he recognised as having been the job of church windows for centuries. Catholic symbols and the rituals that are performed in the buildings provided a 'form' within which he could express ideas about suffering, mortality, faith and redemption. 'The form is, as almost always now, the stations of the cross and is intended to be read as such. I work into and out from the given form and I do not invent the form. I accept it as right and true. I accept the freedoms it gives me and take no others,' he said.²²

Christian symbols and ideas had been the subject of McCahon's paintings since the 1940s. From 1962 he explored the use of Māori symbols and motifs beginning with his *Koru* series of paintings, *Now is the hour*, also *The koru triptych: haere mai ki konei, haere mai ki konei, hei anō*, then the 1965 *Koru* series. Later he frequently used both Māori and Christian symbols and words as in *Parihaka triptych* (1972).

Writing about the windows he created for the Otara Convent, built in 1966, McCahon described his approach: 'I'm making metal grilles for twelve windows and a set of fourteen stations.'²³ He used crosses, triangles and cubes extensively in his windows, forms he also deployed prominently in his paintings. The five surviving windows at Ōtara were all intersected by metal T-bars. The most dramatic had a metal frame intersected by a metal cross backed with ruby glass against clear glass, and overlaid with a hoop of bent oversized nails depicting a crown of thorns.

McCaheon's windows for St Ignatius Church in St Heliers, built in 1977, do not explicitly depict the Stations of the Cross, but he used 14 panes (the number associated with the Stations of the Cross) to hold the original windows. He seldom used frames for his paintings, but by definition, windows are framed. However, McCahon didn't want the frame or structure to get in the way of the story. In a letter to O'Reilly in 1977, he wrote, 'Please don't get too hung up on grids. I paint what the story I am using dictates. I don't analyse Mondrian's grids. I see the angels he saw and I see the subjects of his paintings very clearly ... This is the thing I teach and only this. How to build form to hold a story.'²⁴

As well as studying the meaning and order of the signs and symbols he would

employ, McCahon also deliberated and enthused over how colours married, shed light and revealed themselves in the buildings. 'Good glass holds your hands up high and a certain glory filters through your fingers,' he said.²⁵ He shared his passion for this work in his letters, and through them and his sketches we can trace the enormous efforts he went to in order to get the order of the coloured panes right. The technical challenges of working with glass and metals were significant enough for McCahon to discuss them in letters to friends, and he enjoyed collaborating with various glass engineers to make it right. 'Glass has a discipline — like a sonnet — break the rules and the window blows in.'²⁶

...

The challenges of church work were not just technical — dealing with local committees could also be tricky. In 1978, McCahon wrote to Peter McLeavey: 'Tomorrow 8.30 am — talk with the building committee ... Glass. I don't think they understand about glass & certainly not a thing about Catholic symbolism. I find this tragic. I'm packing up a bag of glass samples & drawings & a hunk of chocolate to keep me going.'²⁷

Even quite late in the collaboration's history, when McCahon's stature was undisputed, there were discordant negotiations with building committees. A parishioner at one church suggested to the building committee that McCahon paint a panel to go behind the altar. She was an artist and a doctor, familiar with the Upland Road convent and St Patrick's Church in Te Puke, and she recognised McCahon's brilliance, comparing him to the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Italian painters Giotto and Masaccio. Even so, she suggested to the committee that McCahon need not be paid because she thought he had enough money to live on. The letters in both directions are discomforting, revealing how undervalued artists can be but also, and more interestingly, how very much McCahon wanted to do this work.

McCaheon was not raised a Catholic. In fact, both sides of his family were active in the Presbyterian Church. When he was young, his family belonged to the Maori Hill Presbyterian Church in Dunedin. In the mid-1930s, when he was driving across the Taieri Plain, southwest of the city, McCahon experienced an epiphany inspired by that landscape. He described its distinctly un-Presbyterian expression in a piece for *Landfall* magazine in 1966:

Driving one day with the family over hills from Brighton or Taieri Mouth to the Taieri Plain, I first became aware of my own particular God, perhaps an Egyptian God, but standing far from the sun of

Egypt in the Otago cold. Big Hills stood in front of little hills, which rose up distantly across the plain from the flat land: there was a landscape of splendour, order and peace. (The Crucifixion had not yet come: Perhaps this landscape was of the time before Jesus. I saw an angel in this land. Angels can herald beginnings.) I saw something logical, orderly and beautiful belonging to the land and not yet to its people. Not yet understood or communicated, not even really yet invented. My work has largely been to communicate this vision and to invent a way to see it.²⁸

McCaughon's son William recounts that, following this experience, his father's minister was 'unable to concede any relevance to individual revelation outside the Church's sacraments',²⁹ as a result, the McCaughon family left the Presbyterian Church. For a while, McCaughon attended Quaker meetings, and several years prior to making the Upland Road windows he had taken instruction in the Catholic Church. He mentioned to a friend that he had wanted to be a Catholic and was not accepted, but in fact, he was unable to subscribe to some of Catholicism's tenets and to 'devolve self-responsibility to the Church'.³⁰ In a letter to O'Reilly in 1978, he wrote, 'And here I stand outside all churches and God Boxes and often would like to be inside but can't ever be quite there'.³¹ McCaughon's letters reveal a man grappling with questions of faith and doubt. Despite not belonging to a church, he relied upon some of the constraints that churches offered.

...

In the middle of 2018, I showed Cynthia Smith, the chair of the McCaughon House Trust, some of the photographs I had taken of the buildings my father designed, along with McCaughon's windows and Dibble's bronze works. She understood immediately the importance of the windows to McCaughon and to the people who use the buildings. As McCaughon said, 'You see, church is theatre in the round'.³² But to capture the work properly as a backdrop to a 'play', reflecting light, meaning and sacredness to those gathered together in worship in a building made for that purpose, Cynthia said we would need to make a film.

Later that year, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki announced it would mount a McCaughon exhibition to coincide with the centenary of the artist's birth. When *A Place to Paint: Colin McCaughon in Auckland* opened in August 2019, the meticulously conserved Upland Road clerestory windows were one of its key features.

In June 2019, with my friend the film director Christopher Dudman, I embarked on

making what we initially envisaged as a short film. As preparations for the McCaughon exhibition got under way, we were able to record the painstaking process of re-creating the Upland Road windows for the exhibition, as well as the stories of the other works. Watching the conservators at work and witnessing the enormous effort needed to bring the Upland Road windows back to life highlighted the awful neglect many of the windows had suffered over the past 40 years. The film grew into a full-length documentary aiming to capture what remains of that 14-year collaboration and the dozen buildings.

The Upland Road buildings are now a private residence and the convent chapel houses an indoor swimming pool. Some of McCaughon's windows survive as an artwork in the collection of the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, but Dibble's bronze candlesticks and tabernacle are lost without trace. St Patrick's Church in Te Puke, with its two sets of splendid McCaughon windows, was closed in 2019 because it does not meet earthquake standards. The windows and sculpture gather dust.

The small chapel attached to the convent in Ōtara originally contained 12 McCaughon windows, a crucifix made by McCaughon and artist Garth Tapper, and Stations of the Cross made by McCaughon. Just months before a bulldozer demolished the building in late 2020, Chris and I discovered one splendid surviving window and two pairs of simple panes. The windows, which we managed to save, can be authenticated as McCaughon's from his letters and sketches. We were also able to identify the Dibble bronze tabernacle, which is now stored safely in the archives at the Catholic Diocese of Auckland, having been recently retrieved from a garage. At St Ignatius in St Heliers, lovely old lead-light panels from the original church have been incorporated into larger McCaughon works. The Dibble tabernacle still looks handsome, referencing the old church as well as the new.

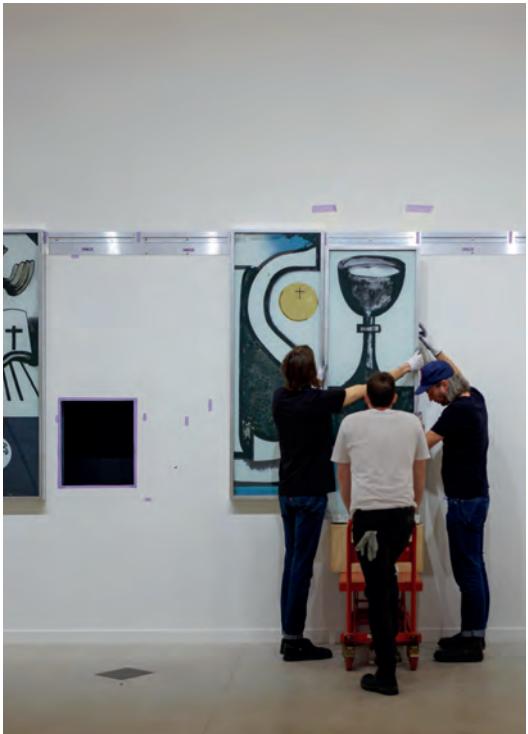
McCaughon also made wonderful windows for three school buildings designed by my father. Those made for the chapel at Liston College in Henderson are cherished, along with Dibble's bronze and concrete work and my father's furniture, and images of these pieces appear regularly on the cover of the school magazine and in newsletters. Likewise, Baradene College of the Sacred Heart in Remuera has given its pair of McCaughon windows pride of place. When the school's science block was demolished in 2002, the windows were carefully removed and reinstalled in a new school chapel/auditorium.

The third set of McCaughon school windows has a somewhat different, more dramatic history. My father told me about two beautiful windows, each a metre square, that McCaughon had made to go in a chapel he designed for McKillop College,



Above: Liston College, Henderson, photographed by James Hackshaw shortly after its completion in 1979. Hackshaw Collection, Architecture Archive, Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services

Below: St Patrick's Church, Te Puke, photographed by James Hackshaw shortly after its completion in 1969. Hackshaw Collection, Architecture Archive, Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services



Above: Sarah Hillary, Annette McKone and Tim Wagg installing the printed panels into the light boxes containing the original Upland Road windows, in preparation for the 2019 exhibition *A Place to Paint: Colin McCahon in Auckland*. Bridget Hackshaw

Below: Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki staff hanging the light boxes containing the Upland Road windows in preparation for *A Place to Paint: Colin McCahon in Auckland*. Bridget Hackshaw

a girls' school in Rotorua. I wasn't sure whether they had survived; what Chris and I found was both thrilling and shocking.

Yes, the windows were still intact, but their position was precarious. They had been removed from their original position in the school and fitted into the walls of the altar of a temporary chapel at John Paul College on an adjoining site. Some time later, this room had become the drama department's storeroom. The windows sat just a metre off the ground, and the wall into which they were fitted backed onto an outdoor play area.

We had invited McCahon's daughter, Victoria Carr, and my brother Mark Hackshaw to join us. We will never forget the moment when the windows were revealed. Lyall Thurston, a school board member, stepped into the small room, pushed his way past heavy steel racks laden with drama costumes and exposed two windows — and there was McCahon's glass, luminous and intact.

I was able to authenticate the windows as McCahon's from his life-size drawings of them, held in my father's archives at the University of Auckland, and later from McCahon's own archive of smaller drawings held at the Hocken Collections Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago, in Dunedin. The Rotorua school windows have since been removed from the drama storeroom and refitted in a prominent position behind plate glass in the foyer of the brand-new Thurston Performing Arts Centre alongside the original school. They were unveiled in their third home in December 2020.

Colin McCahon also made windows for three private houses designed by my father, including our own family home, in Brilliant Street, St Heliers, where a window symbolising a kauri tree holding up the house was set into a west-facing wall in the family room in 1974. My parents sold the house in 1985, and the window was removed by the owners in 2019 and installed into a new house nearby in 2020.

Another set has been destroyed, but the window McCahon designed for the South Auckland house of Jiggs (Lindsay) Poole and Josie Poole in 1972 is now in its third home. McCahon understood the longevity of a window. He asked the whole Poole family to comment on his sketch for their window, which showed the landscape horizons from the house as viewed from the top of the hill at Flat Bush.³³

...

My father and Colin McCahon enjoyed working together. In a letter to Peter McLeavey, McCahon offered some insight into how the collaboration operated: 'We have looked at the drawings for the glass & talked about it — it's all go. I'm lucky James and I can question & criticize our work & arrive at good answers. I lop off bits on

his building — he changes my glass panels.’³⁴ Dibble observed that McCahon and my father shared a vision of what was of value. He was much younger than the others but felt very accepted and part of the team. During their first job together at Upland Road, the three men discussed the work. After that, Dibble said, there was conversation about ‘what symbols were possible and that sort of thing’, but he felt he was allowed to get on and do his work without interference.³⁵

These collaborative projects exist mainly in public buildings and yet are mostly experienced in a very private way. People who have gathered in chapels and churches to pray and worship have gazed at works by Dibble and McCahon over hours, days and years. The symbols and images in these buildings might rarely be explicitly referred to, yet people observe them, and they become part of their own visual and spiritual vocabulary.

In photographing these well-used and sometimes abandoned buildings and their artworks — now 45 to 55 years old — I have tried to convey what people ‘see’ of the space, art and light, as well as the patina and artefacts of a community’s use of them. Light

floods over furniture and floors from high windows; windows create coloured reflections on adjoining walls; walls and furniture are dented and marked with half a century of use. There are film screens, remnants of Blu-Tack, cobwebs in high places, and velvet curtains and blinds that are sometimes jammed shut, filtering the light spilling from McCahon’s windows. And there are bunches of everlasting flowers, posters, art made by parishioners and works integrated from previous buildings.

The communities who own these spaces have enriched what they started with. At St Francis de Sales Church, for example, a lovely small wooden cross has been carved by a parishioner to attach the key to the Dibble tabernacle. The churches that are still being used are cherished, and all the elements keep working together.

In the following chapters, contributors will explore different aspects of the works, including the value of the buildings and artworks; the importance of the work and collaboration to Hackshaw, McCahon and Dibble; and how the works might have contributed to a wider discourse on local art and architecture.

Notes

- 1 Two of the buildings were outside Auckland. In the 1960s and 1970s the Catholic Diocese of Auckland included Te Puke and Rotorua.
- 2 The Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki is referred to in this book by its relevant contemporary name. From 1925 to 1954 it was known as Auckland Art Gallery, from 1954 to 1996 as Auckland City Art Gallery, and from 1996 as Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.
- 3 Andrew Barrie, ‘James Hackshaw’s Public Buildings’, Itinerary No. 4, *Block: The Broadsheet of the Auckland Branch of the New Zealand Institute of Architects* 6 (2007): 1–3. The University of Auckland is referred to in this book by its relevant contemporary name. Until January 1962 it was known as Auckland University College, after which its name changed to University of Auckland.
- 4 Colin McCahon, ‘The Catalogue’, in *Colin McCahon: A Survey Exhibition* (Auckland: Auckland City Art Gallery, 1972), 33.
- 5 William McCahon, ‘A Letter Home’, in *Colin McCahon: A Question of Faith*, eds Marja Bloem and Martin Browne (Nelson/Amsterdam: Craig Potton Publishing/Stedelijk Museum, 2003), 31.
- 6 CM to PF, January 1976.
- 7 Peter Wood worked on the Upland Road convent, the Hackshaw House on Brilliant Street, the Poole House, the Baradene College science block and the Gillman House alteration, and spent seven years building Liston College.
- 8 CM to PF, 1979.
- 9 Vincent O’Sullivan, *Ralph Hotere: The Dark Is Light Enough* (Auckland: Penguin, 2020), 102.
- 10 Paul Dibble, interviewed by Christopher Dudman for the documentary film accompanying this book, August 2019.
- 11 James Hackshaw in conversation with Bridget Hackshaw, 1999. Hackshaw Family Collection.
- 12 Charles Brasch, letter to Hamish Keith, 10 July 1966. Colin McCahon folder MS-0996-002-226, McLeavey Gallery Collection, Dunedin.
- 13 CM to PM, 17 April 1973.
- 14 CM to RO'R, 25 November 1969.
- 15 Dibble, interviewed by Dudman.
- 16 James Hackshaw, ‘Colin McCahon and Church Architecture’ (lecture at the *Gates and Journeys* exhibition, Auckland City Art Gallery, 23 February 1989). EH McCormick Research Library, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.
- 17 McCahon, ‘The Catalogue’, 26.
- 18 Barrie, ‘James Hackshaw’s Public Buildings’, 1.
- 19 Hackshaw, ‘Colin McCahon and Church Architecture’.
- 20 Julia Gatley (ed.), *Group Architects: Towards a New Zealand Architecture*, exhibition catalogue (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2010). See ‘Hackshaw and the Group’ (page 31) for a summary of the Group and its iterations.
- 21 Frederika Hackshaw, ‘Group Architects’, unpublished notes, 26 July 2004. Hackshaw Family Collection.
- 22 CM to RO'R, 3 October 1977.
- 23 CM to EM, 21 December 1966.
- 24 CM to RO'R, 17 October 1977.
- 25 CM to PM, November 1976.
- 26 CM to JC and AC, 2 August 1976.
- 27 CM to PM, July 1978.
- 28 Colin McCahon, ‘Beginnings’, *Landfall* 20, no. 4 (1966): 364.
- 29 William McCahon, ‘A Letter Home’, 30.
- 30 Ibid., 31.
- 31 CM to RO'R, 12 April 1978.
- 32 CM to FH, 30 March 1977.
- 33 CM to JLP and JJP, 1972.
- 34 CM to PM, 6 June 1978.
- 35 Dibble, interviewed by Dudman.

PART 2

The Projects



BENEDICTION

GLORY BE
GOD IN HIGH



KYRIE

ELEISON

KYRIE

ELEISON

CONVENT CHAPEL OF THE SISTERS OF OUR LADY OF THE MISSIONS

Remuera

This chapel and living quarters for a small community of nuns was commissioned in 1964 and opened in 1966. The centrepiece of the convent was a high-ceilinged private chapel. Contrasting with geometrically complex churches fashionable at the time, the high white walls, parquet floor and wooden ceiling defined an austere, simple space. The sanctuary was adorned with a tabernacle and candlesticks by Paul Dibble.¹ Colin McCahon's clerestory windows around each side of the chapel were his largest public commission and reignited an interest in biblical symbolism that fuelled his work for years to come. James Hackshaw designed the wooden furniture.

The Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions arrived in New Zealand from France in 1865 and are known here as the Mission Sisters. Their houses were established so that the sisters could teach in the local parish-owned primary schools. In 1963, the Mission Sisters bought an old house on one and a half acres at 78 Upland Road, Remuera, that could serve as a formation house for temporary professed sisters.

In 1964, James Hackshaw was commissioned to design a second block to house a community of nuns. The building was sold by the nuns in 1989, the chapel

was deconsecrated, and Sister Maria Park facilitated the removal of the windows for safe storage at the Auckland City Art Gallery. The gallery (now Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki) holds a total of 22 panes from the clerestory. The McCahon East windows were conserved by the gallery and were part of the exhibition *A Place to Paint*, held from August 2019 to March 2020.

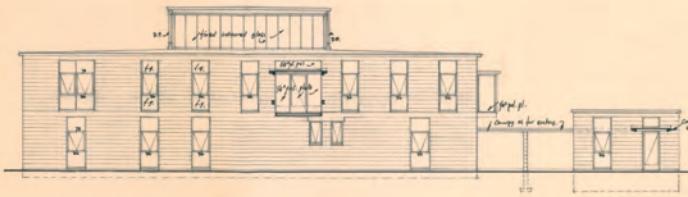
The building has since become a private residence, the land has been subdivided, and the chapel has been converted to an indoor swimming pool.

Note

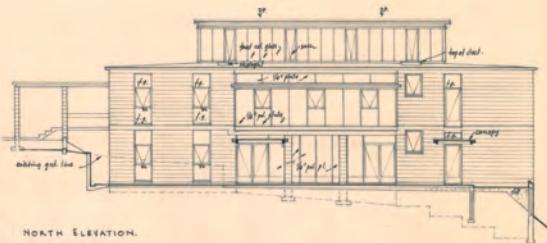
1 Andrew Barrie, 'James Hackshaw's Public Buildings', Itinerary No. 4, *Block: The Broadsheet of the Auckland Branch of the New Zealand Institute of Architects* 6 (2007): 1–3.



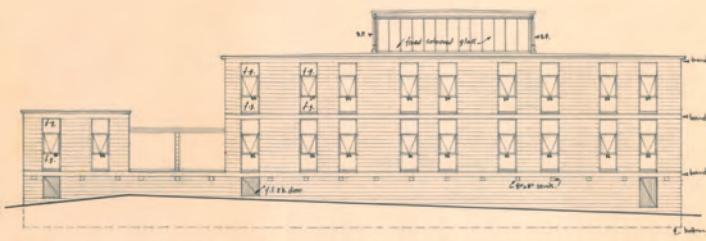




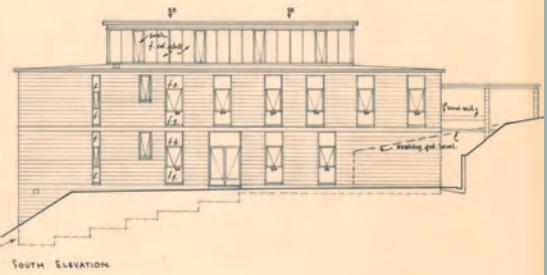
EAST ELEVATION



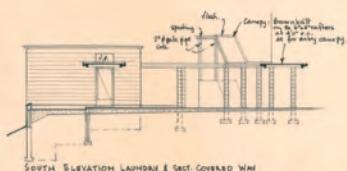
NORTH ELEVATION.



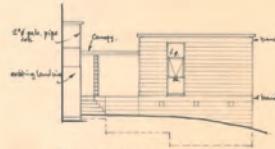
WEST ELEVATION.



SOUTH ELEVATION



SOUTH ELEVATION LAUNDRY & SERV. COVERED WAY



NORTH ELEVATION LAUNDRY

(1) - decorative flat glass.
 (2) - limestone generally at 65° about floor.
 (3) - decorative big bony shells.
 (4) - Note: Windows under windows, do not be
 between windows, as windows are double top of floor.
 (5) - Calculate all other sash, sill
 height from internal steel.

SCALE 1/100' Dwg No. 1	PROPOSED BUILDING AT 78 UPLAND ROAD: LEMUERA FOR THE SISTERS OF OUR LADY OF THE MISSIONS.	James Hackshaw BArch ANZIA S. G. Bentwich St. Auckland C. 40078	The Conventor Hotel, Verity Hill Dimensions And Levels On Site	FILE NO: 555	Sheet No: 1 of set 01
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Previous pages: The Upland Road convent's East and West windows in 1966. Hackshaw Collection, Architecture Archive, Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services

Above: James Hackshaw's elevation drawings of the Upland Road convent. Hackshaw Collection, Architecture Archive, Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services

Letter to Charles Brasch,
5 July 1966

The final wall over the university holidays turned out very successfully I feel. Both the Bishop and Archbishop have been out and are pleased. The tabernacle (in cast bronze) by Paul Dibble is installed and excellent. The thing I most regret is the loss of the concrete blocks under a sandy plaster painted cream and off white. The various elements have become separated - windows from walls from ceilings from the outside etc. Not bad, but not as good as it was.

Letter to Ron O'Reilly,
29 December 1966, from the Hotel
Cecil, Taumarunui

Also finished one (painted & in the N.Z. painting show) series of Stations - another painted landscape & writing - & in the R.C. show - these two with the Upland Road wall in mind - & a third set on small wooden panels - black cross (Maltese style) numerals in Copper Nails for Otara. Very handsome indeed. So haven't had a moment to spare.

Letter to Charles Brasch,
29 December 1966, from the Hotel
Cecil, Taumarunui

Also have finished a set of stations I have been working on most of the year. 14 separate panels - landscape in black & dirty pale yellow & gray. These possibly for Upland Rd. Have another set also from the last month on three panels, designed for Upland Rd. also but much more unexpected - these form a continuous line across the wall, black on yellow, painted crosses & written messages. [drawing] In both these series the landscape falls or rises with the story, lightens or darkens etc. I've not seen them as in the drawing - only 2 at a time.

Concerning the Thirteen Glass Panels

Colin McCahon¹

The physical art of painting, its mechanics and its labour need not interest the viewer. The work of the artist is done by the time the viewer views. What has been communicated is now of primary importance, indeed, this is the only importance a work of art has.

In these notes, I offer no final reading of my 'text' but an initial help for any who may find my meaning and intentions obscure. As an introductory and possibly necessary reminder to the viewer — this is not stained glass — nor is it the conventional painted glass of some churches. I have treated these thirteen panels as one unit, divisible into single panels for contemplation but resolving into one whole at the same time.

The manner of my painting is contemporary; the Church is both contemporary and ancient. These panels are based on ancient symbols of faith: I trust that my interpretation of these very living symbols will not offend, but may, in due time, help renew the link, now almost broken, between the Artist and the Church.

Note

1 Colin McCahon, 'Concerning the Thirteen Glass Panels over the Sanctuary, in the Chapel of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions, Remuera', in *Working Towards Meaning: The Restoration of Colin McCahon's Chapel Windows*, ed. Clare McIntosh (Auckland: Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 2019), 13–26, <https://faccdn.nz/artgallery/assets/media/working-towards-meaning-the-restoration-of-colin-mccahons-windows-pages.pdf>.

Panels 1 & 13

'I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was and which is to come, the Almighty . . . I am he that liveth, and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore.' (Revelation: 1–8 and 18)

In the first panel the sun is symbolic of Christ, this interpretation being based on the prophecy of Malachi: 4–2. 'But unto you that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.'

Used in panel 1 and elsewhere in the sequence, clouds make both a formal element in the paintings and are also used symbolically. 'Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him.' (Revelation: 1–7)

In the whole sequence symbolic use is made of light divided from darkness.



Panel 2

Light is symbolic of Christ: (John: 8-12). 'Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall now walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.'

The candle symbolises the coming of Christ in communion — the candlestick, the church. The square or cube on which the candlestick stands is the emblem of the earth and of earthly existence. (The text for this panel is from the Nicene Creed.)



Panel 3

XP: the two Greek letters, ('Chi' and 'Rho'), which most frequently appear in a monogram are the first two letters of the Greek word for Christ. The combination of these two letters readily gives the form of a cross.

As 'Rho' resembles 'P' and 'Chi' is similar to 'X' the monogram is sometimes read as the Latin word 'PAX', peace.



Panel 4

Again, light is divided from darkness but the darkness, though dark is now streaked with light. This cross is symbolic of the resurrection. (Pink, the colour of dawn, is the symbolic colour of the Resurrection.)

IC, XC, NIKA. This ancient monogram symbolises 'Christ the Conqueror'. I and C are the first and last letters of the Greek word IHUC (Jesus), X and C are the first and last letters of XPICTOC (Christ). NIKA is the Greek word for conqueror.



Panel 5

Here a number of the symbols are gathered together to form one. The dove, symbolic of the Holy Ghost first appears in the story of the baptism of Christ. 'And John bore record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.' (John 1:32)

The book in this particular context and bearing these particular symbols: 'T' — Theos — God, and the cross of Christ, becomes symbolic of the Old and New Testaments. (This grouping is also symbolic of the Trinity.)

Below, on an indigo field with clouds symbol of the Unseen God, a circle, symbol of eternity and also of the perfection of God, contains a lily, the flower of the Virgin. (The lily is frequently associated with scenes of the Annunciation.)

In this panel in particular, but also in others use is made of an equilateral triangle as a symbol of the Trinity. (Here again as elsewhere this triangle also provides a formal link between the separate panels.)

