

# artnews

NEW ZEALAND



Autumn 2018

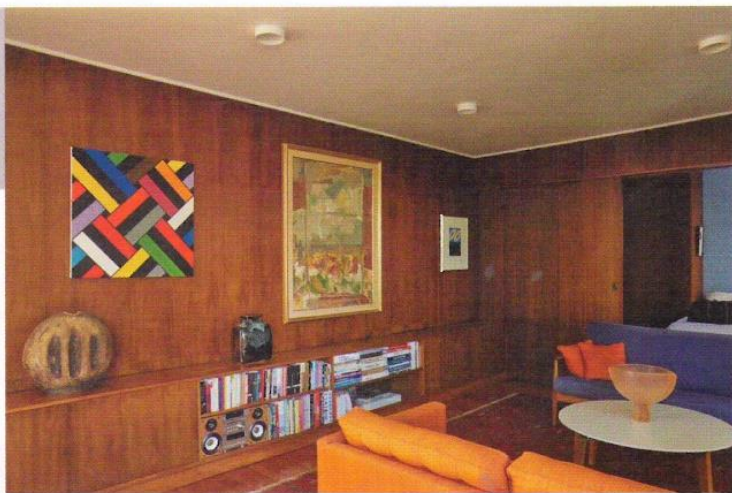


\$11.50 incl. GST

JUSTIN PATON'S LONGER LOOK ♦ ARTISTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE  
JAE KANG ♦ BEN PEARCE ♦ JOHL DWYER ♦ YUKA OYAMA ♦ AIKO ROBINSON  
KATE NEWBY IN MARFA ♦ MERMAIDS IN COPENHAGEN ♦ MANIFESTO  
RENDERING CITIZEN THIEL ♦ FROM SCRATCH REPLAYED

## Confident and eclectic

A private collection of modernist works is to go under the hammer in Wellington.



Left and above: Frank and Lyn Corner, photographed in Washington DC, c.1949; interior view of the Ernst Plischke-designed gatehouse on the Corner family property in Thorndon, featuring works by Len Castle, Ian Scott, Toss Woollaston and Gordon Walters

Right: Rita Angus, *Storm, Hawke's Bay*, 1969, oil on board, 600 x 600mm

Below: Frances Hodgkins, *Pleasure Boats*, 1933, watercolour and gouache, 525 x 415mm



It is a sign of the strength of Auckland's art economy that although the two most significant collections of New Zealand art to be sold in recent years were from Wellington, they both left town to go under the hammer. On 18 March that trend will be broken, when Art + Object offers The Collection of Frank & Lyn Corner in the couple's home town of Wellington. This distinguished collection can also be seen as an historic document.

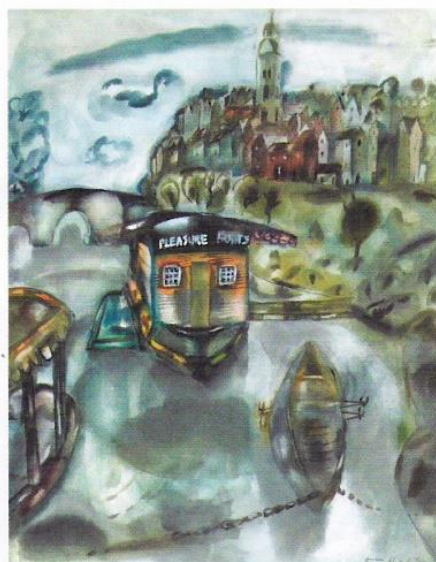
Frank Corner (1920–2014) was one of New Zealand's most eminent diplomats. His career spanned a fascinating period of history, from 1943 when the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was first beginning, through the Kirk and Muldoon years when Frank headed the Ministry. It included post-war work in Washington, London, and Paris, promoting decolonisation at the UN in the 1960s, and as ambassador to the United States during the Johnson and Nixon years.

After the couple's return to New Zealand in 1972, Lyn (1921–2016) became chair of the National Art Gallery council; she was also the art adviser responsible for assembling the significant Rutherford Trust Collection.

The Corners' art collection grew over time, and travelled with them overseas. Although their choices were always personal, they saw that art could help in diplomatic relations by showing an international audience who they and New Zealand were. For today's art audience, the Corners' astute choices show, chronologically, how modernism in New Zealand was born and developed.

Two important works by Frances Hodgkins came from London's Redfern Gallery in the 1950s. John Weeks' *Moroccan Scene*, an oil

he worked on for a decade during the 1920s to 1930s, is an essential link between Cubist Paris and New Zealand. The Corners had their choice of all McCahon's *Landscape Theme and Variations* from the Ikon Gallery in 1963, and the panel he chose epitomises McCahon's vision of this country's landscape. The Angus oil, *Storm, Hawke's Bay*, deserves its place as an icon of New Zealand; it is a glowing and emblematic jewel.



The Corners purchased many works direct from artists. In 1968, while on a brief trip back to New Zealand, Lyn visited Rita Angus at her Thorndon cottage and purchased *Houses, Thorndon*, which Lyn described as a "lasting delight". And there are many works

by Wellington artists whom Frank and Lyn supported and became friends with, most notably John Drawbridge and Tanya Ashken. Drawbridge's large early oil *Window* and Ashken's marble *Torso* have for years greeted visitors to the Corners from the entryway to the Ernst Plischke-designed gatehouse on their property in Thorndon.

In the book *Behind Closed Doors*, Lara Strongman described the Corners' taste as "confident and eclectic, informed by a visual intelligence which reconciles stylistic differences". That reconciliation – between the international and the local, the modern and the traditional – is perhaps what this diplomatic couple did best.

All collections represent something about the lives of the collectors and the times they lived in. What makes the Corner Collection unique and important in the history of New Zealand modernism is the way the Corners' lives intersected so closely with the development of a modern New Zealand, both in artistic terms and in our international relations and national identity.

The Collection of Frank & Lyn Corner will be auctioned on 18 March at the New Zealand Portrait Gallery, Wellington. [artandobject.co.nz](http://artandobject.co.nz)