

Landscape through creative eyes: Strands spun by Doris Lusk, Charles Brasch, Bill Sutton, Lyell Cresswell and David Griffiths

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Abstract

This article explores previously undocumented connections between a group of New Zealand landscape paintings and the resulting poems, music and performance. This unplanned creative sequence, spanning 1964-2008, is the work of significant national cultural figures: Doris Lusk, Charles Brasch, W.A. Sutton, David Griffiths with The Ogen Trio, and Lyell Cresswell with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. Questions arise around the meaning of creative interpretations of nature and landscape, the interface between different formats, and challenges in confirming the identity of artworks. The watercolours (several held in major institutions) and poems are reproduced, together with other supporting images and documentation.

Introduction

A search for documentary evidence relating to the small area of Golden Bay/Mohua in Tasman District unexpectedly led to a much bigger cultural story, a rich transformative progression of creative works that began with six watercolour paintings. Art inspired poetry, followed by fine hand printing, before a culmination in musical composition and performance. In some ways the creative story that unfolds feels almost accidental, beginning with a few paintings almost randomly selected from seventy-three works gathered together for just seventeen days before being dispersed. However, each creator is nationally significant in their own field, weaving in their strands over a period of forty-four years between 1964 and 2008. These are discussed in turn, with the companion images and poems reproduced at the end of the article.

In an earlier era, Golden Bay/Mohua had featured in the 1942 collaboration of Allen Curnow (poet) and Douglas Lilburn (composer) in *Landfall in Unknown Seas*, performed by the NBS String Orchestra.¹ Those connections were, however, part of an officially coordinated effort marking the tercentenary of Abel Tasman's voyage, and the first recorded encounter between Māori and non-Māori on 18/19 December 1642. The creative connections considered here are quite different: a sequence of independent distinct interpretations starting with artist Doris Lusk, followed by poet Charles Brasch, printer Bill Sutton, and composers Lyell Cresswell and David Griffiths.

Although not all six paintings and poems of this sequence relate to Golden Bay/Mohua,² it made sense to consider them and the later music as a single cohesive and interconnected group, and all relate to the South Island. Of the six watercolours, three are held in major public institutions and the current whereabouts of two (*Dark Stream* and *Trees at Totaranui*) are unknown. A visual record of the latter is somewhat uncertain, raising questions of art identification, referred to later.

Broadly speaking, this discussion is a response to seemingly disparate forms of creative interpretation of a shared theme of six watercolours of landscapes. The natural world is a long-established inspiration for art in many formats. However, to respond to or interpret another creator's work in a different creative medium establishes an additional, more complex relationship. Some transitions between interpretations occur more frequently than others, and internet searches can produce interesting examples. It appears less common for art to inspire music, or for poetry to inspire art, except when specifically nurtured.³ The most frequent

interpretation, setting poetry to music, perhaps reflects that both are based on patterns of sound and cadence. While this article touches on the theoretical nature of creative interrelationships, its main focus is to engage with the identity of and connections between a particular set of specific creative works.

I Six Watercolours—Doris Lusk (1916-1990)

Although Doris Lusk had visited and painted the Nelson region since her student days in the 1930s, the paintings referred to here date from the mid-1960s when she was already well established.⁴ Of particular interest is *Wharf at Onekaka No.1* (1965), her earliest extant signed and dated painting of this Golden Bay/Mohua structure.

Onekaka was somewhere Lusk visited regularly, staying with her friends Adelaide and Ian McCubbin, and she became fascinated by the estuary and the gradually disappearing wharf, which became a regular feature in her work for 25 years.⁵ As Lusk herself explains in a 1987 interview, “It just interested me as an image, the beautiful beach and the wharf and the cross-currents of the sea ... the whole beach was so beautiful.”⁶ The 1960s were a very productive period for Lusk, and at this time her watercolours start to show the freer, more assured and impressionistic style shown in these paintings.

Lusk’s formal training had begun in her home city of Dunedin in the 1930s, but marriage to engineer Dermot Holland in 1942 brought a move to Christchurch. There she became part of a network of artists including influential painters such as Colin McCahon, Rita Angus and Leo Bensemann⁷ who were members of a loose alliance referred to as “The Group”, a significant force in the Christchurch arts community for 50 years from 1927 to 1977.⁸ Together with a literary community that included James K. Baxter, Charles Brasch, Allen Curnow, and Denis Glover at his Caxton Press, they were part of an exceptionally rich cultural life in the city that also extended to music (Douglas Lilburn) and theatre (Ngaio Marsh). Lusk’s standing as an artist makes it rather surprising that no in-depth study of her life and work has been published.

However, it was in Dunedin in August 1966 that four of the six watercolours discussed made their first appearance.⁹ They were part of a total showing of seventy-three of Lusk’s works, in a retrospective exhibition at Dunedin Public Art Gallery (DPAG) that included thirteen other paintings relating to Golden Bay/Mohua.¹⁰ It should be noted that some comments here reflect the author’s belief that *View Down a Tree Lined Avenue* is actually her *Trees at Totaranui*, an identification challenge discussed later.

Of the six watercolours, only one (*Trees at Totaranui*) does not have the sea (or freshwater, in *Dark Stream*) as a dominant visual feature, though Tōtaranui is itself a popular if remote coastal location. All are strong and inviting images, particularly drawing on the effect of light, especially on natural features; even the sole man-made structure (in *Wharf at Onekaka*) here blurs into the distance compared with some of her later iterations.



Advertisement for Lusk's exhibition in the *Otago Daily Times*, 27 August 1966 (p.32)

As Charles Brasch noted in his review of the exhibition, “[...] in her water-colours of the sixties [1960s], especially those done at Onekaka this year, she struck a fine maturity of ease and subtle richness [...]”.¹¹ By 1966 Lusk (at age 50) was already represented in major galleries and collections throughout New Zealand, and Brasch himself appears to have lent one work and purchased three paintings in the exhibition.¹²

II Six Poems—Charles Brasch (1909-1973)

In New Zealand literary history, Charles Brasch is probably best known as founder of the important literary/cultural journal *Landfall*, which he edited from his home in Dunedin for 20 years from 1946, and which is still published today. His review comment above comes from the final issue under his editorship.

Brasch is also still acknowledged as a significant poet among his generation, with five small volumes of his work published during his lifetime by the Caxton Press in Christchurch, which was also the printer and publisher of *Landfall*. Brasch and Denis Glover had a long friendship, strengthened during the time both spent in England during World War II. Brasch's poetic output evolved from schooldays throughout his life, moving from lyrical through to a simpler modernist style with direct expression. As Vincent O'Sullivan observes in his useful overview: “...one thing Brasch did, which is probably the most difficult that a poet can attempt. He successfully changed his style, to accommodate new emphases he wished to give.”¹³

The six poems inspired by Lusk's watercolours were first published as a slim, hand-printed pamphlet, *Six Water-Colours After Doris Lusk: Poems*, discussed in the following section, of which several copies remain. It was not until after Brasch's death in 1973 that they were

published in his already planned sixth volume of work (*Home Ground*), and again ten years later in his *Collected Poems*.¹⁴

Why and when Brasch chose to respond to the particular six watercolours from all the works shown in Lusk's 1966 retrospective is not documented, and none were ones that he purchased. A number of other watercolours were on show and, as noted above, the paintings he chose to write about depict several locations. Several of the poems (notably "Rocks at Oaro", "Coast at Tarakohe", and "Dark Stream") are almost haiku-like in their spareness, and reading the printed words alone certainly creates imagined pictures. It is much more interesting, however, to read them alongside the Lusk images and consider how well Brasch has "seen" the paintings through words. Consider the derelict wharf structure, for example: "Black into storm / Stumbles the broken cortege of piers" ("Wharf at Onekaka"), and ensuring we see the subtlety of the artist's work: "Hill haze dissolves / In sulphurous lemon." ("Rocks at Oaro").

But perhaps his "Onekaka Beach" reads too much storm drama into the painting? Questions arise: Should a poem "recreate" a painting, or is the painting simply a trigger for a new creation?¹⁵ Certainly "Trees at Totaranui" offers a different, more intimate style of writing, including several human references (hold hands, walk, underfoot, heart, arms) when trees are the only living things in the painting. The poet has almost moved into being part of the scene he is creating, in a "new narrative".

From Brasch's response when a copy of the Templar Press pamphlet arrived, it seems most likely that he wrote the poems during or soon after the exhibition, and then gave the manuscript to Doris Lusk. His journal (31 December 1966) records "[...] Doris [Lusk] has sent me a little pamphlet containing the six trifles I wrote for her watercolours, handsomely printed by Bill Sutton."¹⁶ His undated note of appreciation to Sutton is warm, "Dear Bill, to thank you for the charming booklet you made of my miniature poems—it was a most delightful surprise. Good wishes for 1967 Charles B."¹⁷

In anticipation of comments below on musical compositions based on Brasch's poems, we can't know what his response would have been. All but one of the twenty musical interpretations of his poems (by seven composers) were created after he had died.¹⁸ As a group, the "Lusk" poems are the only ones to have been set to music by more than one New Zealand composer: by Lyell Cresswell and David Griffiths, both of which are discussed.¹⁹

III Fine Hand Printing—W.A. (Bill) Sutton (1917-2000)

W.A. (Bill) Sutton is among New Zealand's most respected artists, known particularly for his Canterbury landscape paintings, though he worked in other fields including calligraphy, and also lectured at the Canterbury College School of Art in Christchurch from the 1950s until retirement in 1979.²⁰ A Dunedin Public Art Gallery advertisement in the *Otago Daily Times* of 20 August 1966 (p.32) notes that he was to talk about the Doris Lusk retrospective exhibition at 3 p.m. on Sunday 21 August at the gallery. By then Lusk was also a colleague as well as a contemporary; in 1966 she was appointed as a tutor at the Canterbury College School of Art.²¹

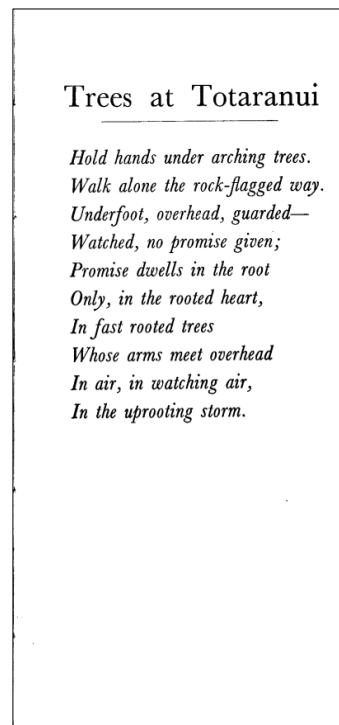
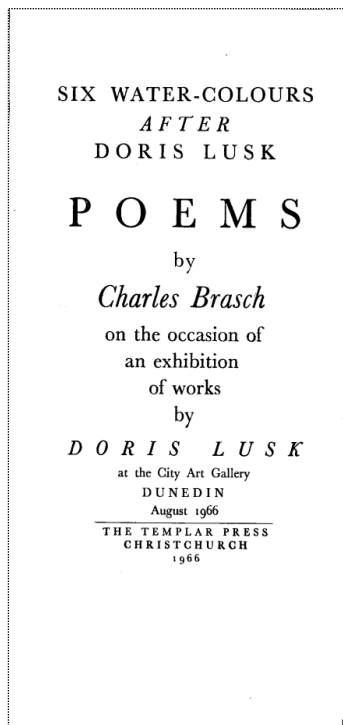
Sutton's skill as a fine hand-printer, using an Albion printing press set up in a room behind the garage of his home in Richmond, Christchurch, in the late 1960s is much less well known. This is partly because most items produced under his Templar Press imprint fall within the collection category of ephemera. The current owner of the printing press, Peter Vangioni, has written a helpful detailed account of the range of items in Sutton's collection at Christchurch Art Gallery, and Sutton's development as a hand printer.²² The printing press is also specifically mentioned

in an article about the 20 Templar Street property in a small local magazine,²³ with some additional details in his biography.²⁴

Sutton's printing of Brasch's *Six water-colours After Doris Lusk: Poems* therefore dates from the first year of operation of the Templar Press and its format is similar to other early items described by Vangioni. Typographically the title page impresses as "classical"; recognisably influenced by late 17th-century book production, which is also consistent with his exclusive use of Baskerville type, created in the 1750s. The poems, one per page, are set in italic of a generous size and enhanced by surrounding white space. This is reminiscent of the deceptively simple style of the post-war private presses,²⁵ though two line breaks in the setting of "Wharf at Onekaka" suggest a lack of experience, or perhaps haste. Production of printed copies is often considered a simple mechanical process, but hand-setting type and hand printing are slow, careful and time consuming, especially if high quality is a consideration.

The pamphlet is known through seven copies, one held privately and the other six in libraries.²⁶ Sutton's letter accompanying the copy he donated to the Alexander Turnbull Library explains that "I think I printed 10 only, and kept this one for myself. The others were a present to Doris, except one, which I gave to a visiting English calligrapher, William M. Gardner, who called in while I was sewing the booklets together."²⁷

Title page and final poem in W.A. (Bill) Sutton's hand-set printing of the Charles Brasch poems; ten copies were produced.



Music and Performances: Introduction

As the preceding sections suggest, this story is one of gradually evolving interest, including some elements of surprise. To the observer there is an additional hindsight interest because of the significance of each creator and their interconnections, especially those based in Christchurch and Dunedin. The next phase was to be somewhat different. Somewhat paradoxically, this concluding “chapter” is where the unfolding story of the strands began, a story initially focused on the simple goal of building a collection of material that documented Golden Bay/Mohua, regardless of format.

Music and performance mark a new beginning, a new generation, one with stronger links to Wellington and Auckland. The new creative artists (“musicians” for clarity) were not part of the close network that had linked the artist, the poet and the printer, all of whom had passed away. Nor would the musicians have seen the paintings or the 1966 exhibition where they were brought together for a short time before dispersal to new owners. Only the text of Brasch’s poems would be the starting point for the musicians, but there is a deeper experience for audiences who also look at Lusk’s paintings.

IV Voices of Ocean Winds—Lyell Cresswell (1944-2022)

One composition based on the Brasch poems surfaced almost by chance. It is the expatriate New Zealand composer Lyell Cresswell’s *Voices of Ocean Winds* (1989),²⁸ a commissioned major work for large choir and orchestra that seems to have been performed only once, in 1990. That performance and a later spoken introduction are available online.²⁹

Cresswell’s work has several characteristics that set it apart from the more tightly interconnected relationships described elsewhere:

- The title of the work is taken from a line in an unrelated Brasch poem (“Home Ground”);
- In omitting Charles Brasch’s subtitle for the group of poems – “(After Doris Lusk)” – the link to the artist and her paintings is absent from the score (but was included in the programme);
- Its five movements are based on five of the Brasch *Six Water-Colours* poems (omitting “Coast at Tarakohe”), and the order of poems referenced/sung is different from Brasch’s original order. Cresswell notes in the programme “I have changed Brasch’s order of the poems to suit the musical conception.”³⁰
- Two of the five movements (“Rocks at Oaro” and “Trees at Totaranui”) are for orchestra only, although the words of all five poems are printed in the score (p. 2) and the programme.
- In the choral movements (“Onekaka Beach”, “Dark Stream”, “Wharf at Onekaka”) Cresswell uses Brasch’s words freely and creatively, e.g. through repetition and altered sequences, which further distances his composition from Brasch’s work.

Local reviews of the concert were not enthusiastic about Cresswell’s work.³¹ However, Peter Beatson’s 1991 exploration “From Landscape to Environment: Representations of Nature in New Zealand Classical Music”³² finds it “one of the most spectacular and impressive works of collaboration.” Cresswell’s composition is certainly on a quite different, even overwhelming, scale compared with the creative writing with which it is linked, despite his note in the programme: “The poems themselves say all that is needed to be said about the music.” That assertion seems to conflict with the simple, sensitive wording of the poems themselves and his statement (above) that musical conception had taken precedence over poetry.

Significantly for this article, Beatson also reintroduces the sequential connection between Lusk's paintings and Brasch's poems, and reflects on the artist's own "renderings of nature." This process, "layers of mediation" culminating in Cresswell's composition, creates an associated philosophical problem for Beatson. Is Cresswell's music what Lusk heard when she was painting? Beatson concludes, "Whatever Onekaka beach may have looked like to Doris Lusk, it is only by courtesy of linked associations that it can be heard in Cresswell." While not Beatson's own usage, Cresswell's composition definitely feels a very "new narrative" using the terminology introduced earlier, and quite different from that of both Lusk and Brasch.

Ten years later, Cresswell himself explored the nature of interrelationships between various expressions of creative art. This adds an interesting extra dimension to Beatson's description of *Voices of Ocean Winds* as a "collaboration" and reference to "layers of mediation," and Cresswell's own preference for "musical conception" over the poetry on which it was based:

Perhaps we can see music as an extension of literature. Composers are story-tellers; not of course literally, [...] but in a similar way they recount a series of connected events, setting up, exploring and resolving ideas, or depicting moods and atmospheres. [...]

When we encounter a painting, say a still life or landscape, we look for something deep and private—something about art, about ourselves, about life. If we find what we are looking for we realise that no attempt to put it into words is adequate.³³

Speculation is properly outside the scope of this record of interrelated creative works. However, it is interesting to wonder whether Beatson would also have made a similar observation about David Griffiths' slightly later composition, which feels so much more closely linked to both Lusk's and Brasch's works.

V Six Watercolours—David Griffiths (b.1950)

Distinguished New Zealand composer and baritone David Griffiths has explained³⁴ that his score setting the six Brasch poems to music was commissioned in 1994 for the Karlheinz Company. This ensemble, which still performs, was founded in 1978 by John Rimmer at the University of Auckland School of Music. It was not Griffiths' first or only use of Brasch's poetry. For example, in 1979 he had composed "Shoriken", a 16-part song cycle (baritone and piano) that Griffiths went on to record himself in 2010.³⁵ His more complex 1980 composition "The Discovery" took its text from one section of Brasch's 3-part post-war longer poem "Genesis", which is well matched by the interweaving voices of choir and soloists.³⁶

Griffiths had been given the freedom of choosing which of Brasch's poems he would interpret through music by the executor of Brasch's estate. As it happened, he selected *Six Watercolours*, of which the first page of his score for "Wharf at Onekaka" is reproduced.

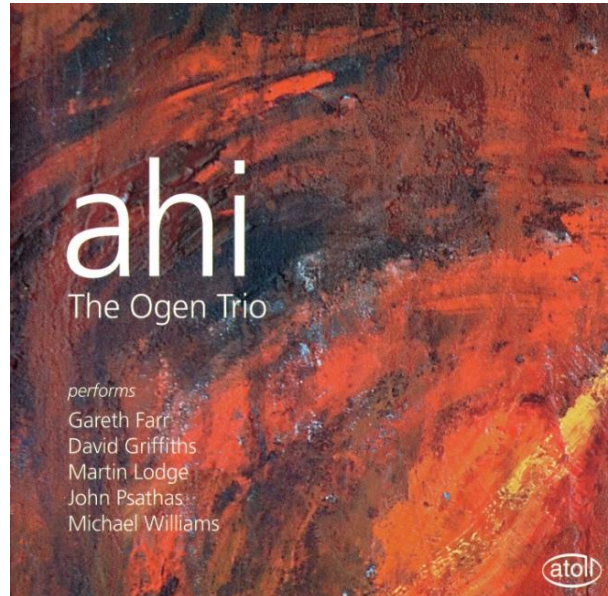
Page 1 of David Griffiths' score for "Wharf at Onekaka", the first of six parts of his *Six Watercolours* composition (1994).

Wharf at Onekaka

Adagio $\text{♩} = 69$ D J Griffiths

© - D.J.Griffiths Music Ltd 1994

Originally scored for baritone, clarinet in B flat, cello and piano, in the 2008 recorded performance on *Ahi* (fire) by The Ogen Trio the clarinet is replaced by violin, with some minor transcriptions. In the recording, the composer also performs the baritone part.³⁷ In this sequence, music (voice and instruments) captures both the simplicity of Brasch's words and the impressionistic style of the original watercolours. His setting for "Dark Stream" is particularly evocative, which in turn becomes a tribute to Brasch as poet and "narrator" of Lusk's painting. For this writer, perhaps influenced by a long personal connection with the Golden Bay/Mohua landscape, Griffiths' composition, using just four musicians (baritone and piano trio) in the more intimate style of chamber-music, creates a relatable and appropriate synergy.



Cover of Atoll's 2008 CD-ROM recording which includes David Griffiths' performance in his own composition, *Six Watercolours*

The CD notes provide an insight into the inspiration that Brasch's poems had offered Griffiths: "The settings illustrate the words, capturing with musical gesture both the ancient resonance of these once unpeopled places and the dissolution of human presence over time."

Griffiths' composition and recorded performance with The Ogen Trio provide a fitting cadenza to Doris Lusk as muse through her paintings, which had inspired Charles Brasch more than 40 years earlier. However, interesting questions around the nature of interconnected creative "narratives" and "layers of mediation" which surfaced during the present exploration are still unexplored. Maybe in the future all these strands will be the focus of a new raranga (weaving).

Acknowledgements

For the author, this article ventures into unfamiliar territories of art, music, and the modern period. Drawing its strands together in a useful way would not have been possible without the interest, support and input from several people knowledgeable in those fields.

For research support during the difficult Covid period, my appreciation goes to Anthony Tedeschi (Curator Rare Books and Fine Printing, Alexander Turnbull Library), Peter Vangioni (Curator, Christchurch Art Gallery), Tim Jones (Librarian, Christchurch Art Gallery), and Nick Austin (Collections Assistant, Hocken Collections, University of Otago). Malcolm McKinnon and Anthony Grigg contributed helpful advice and support in the text revision stage.

It was particularly helpful to be able to speak with composer/performer David Griffiths and clarify the background to his composition, details of which would otherwise not have been accessible. Others who assisted with information about the musical compositions are Keith McEwing (Alexander Turnbull Library), Jonathan Engle (SOUNZ), Brendan Agnew (NZSO), the Scottish Music Centre, Glasgow, and Wayne Laird (Atoll Ltd).

Doris Lusk's son Patrick Holland has brought a rich understanding and depth of knowledge of her work and life, and Julie Catchpole (Director of the Suter Gallery, Nelson), also contributed helpful details and comments from her own research and interests.

Christchurch Art Consultant Grant Banbury deserves special mention for his willingness to share information about Doris Lusk's works from both his knowledge and from his extensive archives on the artist. His input has saved much time-consuming research and added value to the commentary.

We would all be very pleased to learn of the location of the two paintings the whereabouts of which are currently unknown: *Dark Stream*, and *Trees at Totaranui*. We ask readers with further information to contact us through the publisher of this article.

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These are acknowledged with appreciation, and in order of the material as discussed:

Doris Lusk watercolours: Dr Patrick Holland, executor of Doris Lusk's estate, for permission to reproduce the images of her works included here.

Reproduction rights for the images are as follows: Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa for *Onekaka Wharf No.1*; Dunedin Public Art Gallery for *Onekaka Beach*; Christchurch Art Gallery for *Rocks at Oaro*; Private collection for *Coast at Tarakohe*; Grant Banbury for *Dark Stream*.

Charles Brasch poems: Alan Roddick for the Estate of Charles Brasch, for permitting Brasch's six poems to accompany the Lusk watercolours.

Wharf at Onekaka score: David Griffiths, composer, for permission to reproduce page 1 of his score.

The Ogen Trio performance: Wayne Laird, Atoll Ltd, for permission to reproduce the original cover art of Atoll's *Ahi* CD-ROM.

The Watercolours & Poems

The annotation "whereabouts unknown" in two cases below draws attention to one of the challenges faced by art historians, namely accurately referencing and matching the title/identity of a work. Artists may originally provide a title for a work (e.g. written on its reverse or on the back of a mounting board), but over time this identification may become hidden or lost by subsequent (re)framing. At that point its identity becomes uncertain unless there is additional supporting evidence.

One example below is *Trees at Totaranui*, currently "whereabouts unknown". However, a Lusk watercolour of the same year (1965) is known through an illustrated entry in a June 2000 Webb's auction catalogue. Its title in that catalogue is *View Down a Tree Lined Avenue*, an unusually generic title compared with most of Lusk's own titles. So, are they the same work? The image (reproduced at the end) might be interpreted as matching the textual imagery of Brasch's poem and local knowledge of Tōtaranui. Maybe it is merely wishful thinking, but the author feels reasonably confident in the match; locating the painting may assist in confirmation.

1 Wharf at Onekaka, No.1. 1965. **Collection:** Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (reg. no. 2010-0012-1).

Previously owned by Leo Bensemann, who lent it for the DPAG 1966 retrospective. First exhibited (as *Old Wharf, Onekaka*) in The Group show of 1965 (no.29).



Wharf at Onekaka

Feathers of darkness twitch a sea
Not yet broken. Darker looms
The massed sky descending over
Last gouts of light. Black into storm
Stumbles the broken cortege of piers.

2 Onekaka Beach. 1966. **Collection:** Dunedin Public Art Gallery (acc. 37-1966).



Onekaka Beach

Long sand low lit
Storm veil lurid violet
Steely sea frenzied running
Under flashed blades of lightning
Sand hiss, wind hiss
Thunder stroke of light going out
Night, endless night falling.

3 Rocks at Oaro. 1966. **Collection:** Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū. Gift of David and Faith Thomas, 2022.

Oaro is on the east coast of the South Island, 20km south of Kaikōura. It was another favourite location, which features in several other of her paintings. First exhibited in The Group show of 1966 (no.39).



Rocks at Oaro
Black in the pale water
A sea legion
Of rocks nesting
Black in sleep.
Far low on horizon
Hill haze dissolves
In sulphurous lemon.

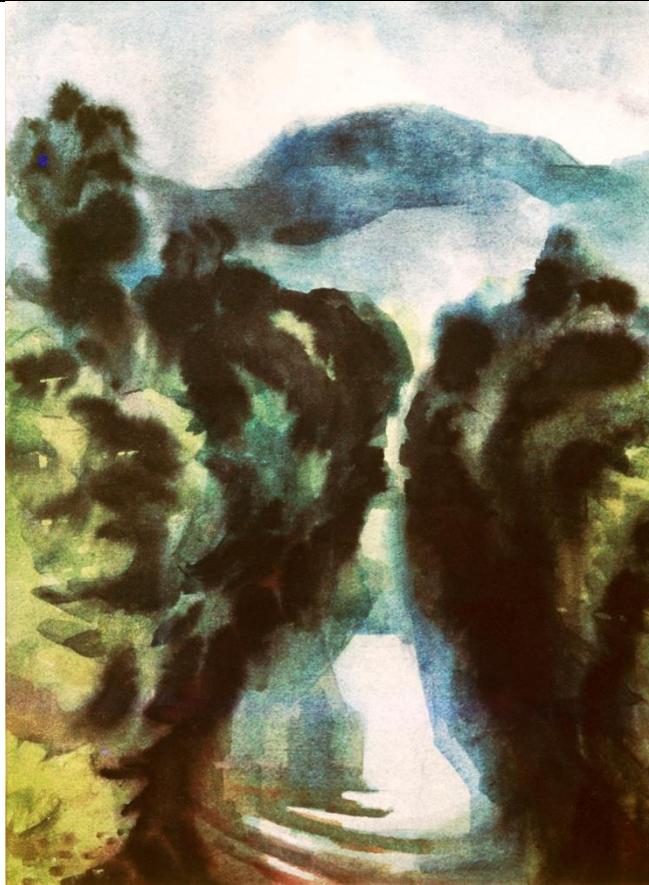
4 Coast at Tarakohe. 1966. **Collection:** Private.



Coast at Tarakohe
Long the swell
Off that steep coast
To rock the sleeping
Sea-bird islets
In the wind's least puff
Buoyantly veering.

5 Dark Stream. 1964. Whereabouts unknown. (Image is a digital scan taken from a 35mm slide in Doris Lusk's archives; supplied by Art Consultant Grant Banbury.)

Purchased from the DPAG 1966 retrospective by Lusk's friend and fellow student Rodney Kennedy. First exhibited (as *Dark Stream, West Coast*) in The Group show, November 1964 (no.46). A review of that exhibition (*Press*, 4 November 1964, p.18) specifically mentions *Dark Stream* as "something quite new and very successful". Lusk also painted an oil titled *Stream, West Coast*, exhibited in the April 1964 Canterbury Society of Arts Autumn show.



Dark Stream

All motion is
Here soundless
Through shadow trees
Directionless
Mirror flow
Unreflecting
Where to where
Only here
Held as seen
In the green dark
Still green
Stilled flowing
Dark held stream.

6 Trees at Totaranui. 1965. Whereabouts unknown. Purchased from the DPAG 1966 retrospective by Mr Don Reid.

No image available; but see preliminary note above, and View Down a Tree Lined Avenue, reproduced below.

Trees at Totaranui

Hold hands under arching trees.
Walk along the rock-flagged way.
Underfoot, overhead, guarded—
Watched, no promise given;
Promise dwells in the root
Only, in the rooted heart,
In fast rooted trees
Whose arms meet overhead
In air, in watching air,
In the uprooting storm.



View Down a Tree Lined Avenue

Known from a June 2000 Webb's auction catalogue (item 1251), from which the illustration, title and details come. It was sold on Day 3 (29 June 2000) for \$3,000.

Technical details:

watercolour
signed and dated 1965
360 x 535mm

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*There is no earlier or other record of a Doris Lusk painting with this title.  
Is this **Trees at Totaranui**?*

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<sup>1</sup> From notes accompanying CD-ROM *Alex Lindsay String Orchestra; 50th Anniversary Commemorative Issue* (Wellington: Kiwi Pacific Records International, 1998), CD SLD-107, New Zealand Composer Edition. The NBS [National Broadcasting Service] String Orchestra was at times part of a larger grouping, the National Orchestra.

<sup>2</sup> The paintings which relate to places other than Golden Bay/Mohua are *Rocks at Oaro* (coastal view, south of Kaikōura) and *Dark Stream* (West Coast, South Island). For further details see the concluding section which reproduces the images and poems.

<sup>3</sup> A recent example of such nurturing is *The Long Waves of Our Ocean: New Responses to Pacific Poems*, an exhibition at the National Library of New Zealand, November 2022-May 2023, in which poetry inspires art. Seven “early career” artists respond to poems by five 20th-century poets, only one of whom is still living. The attractive printed catalogue (of the same title) contains a thoughtful introduction by the curator, Hanahiva Rose. The commissioned artists each chose their poem from a small selection offered to them, so the connections were at least partly managed by the National Library.

<sup>4</sup> Lusk’s life and the Golden Bay/Mohua connection are well documented in: Lisa Beaven, “Lusk, Doris More”, *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, first published in 2000, updated June, 2014. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/5122/lusk-doris-more>, and in Lisa Beaven and Grant Banbury, *Landmarks: The Landscape Paintings of Doris Lusk* (Christchurch: Robert McDougall Art Gallery and Hazard Press, 1996). Lusk was also a recognized potter, using her married name Doris Holland.

<sup>5</sup> Constructed in the 1930s for exports from the nearby nationally significant Onakaka [sic] Iron and Steel Company Ltd works. The wharf and tramline are no.5126 (Category 2) on the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga list.

<sup>6</sup> Doris Lusk quoted by Beaven and Banbury, *Landmarks*, 35, in the “Onakaka” section, which also discusses technical features of her work at this time.

<sup>7</sup> Bensemman, from a Golden Bay/Mohua family, also painted a watercolour of the Onakaka wharf in 1965, now in the collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū (acc.2003/63).

<sup>8</sup> Peter Simpson, *Bloomsbury South: The Arts in Christchurch, 1933-1953* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2016), provides a valuable introduction to their community and influence. Also see J.A. Catchpole, “The Group,” (MA thesis, University of Canterbury, 1984). Digitized catalogues from The Group exhibitions and other resources are on the Christchurch City Libraries website: <https://christchurchcitylibraries.com/heritage/publications/art/thegroup/>; the Suter Art Gallery, Nelson, also holds a set (ex Leo Bensemman) of The Group catalogues in its collection.

<sup>9</sup> *Wharf at Onakaka No.1* had been exhibited (as *Old Wharf, Onakaka*) in The Group’s 1965 show, and *Dark Stream* had been exhibited (as *Dark Stream, West Coast*) in The Group’s 1964 show.

<sup>10</sup> In the Dunedin Public Art Gallery catalogue, *Doris Lusk Retrospective Exhibition, 14-31 August 1966* (hereafter “DPAG 1966”), the six watercolours relating to Brasch’s poems are numbers 45, 49, 54, 59, 60, 63. An especially useful source has been a copy of DPAG 1966 which is annotated with names of purchasers and other administrative details: “Directors Log”, annotated copy of *Doris Lusk: Retrospective exhibition, 14-31 August 1966, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 1966*, Caxton Press. Doris Lusk artist file, Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago. Comprehensive information on Lusk’s works and their locations has been compiled by Christchurch Art Consultant Grant Banbury.

<sup>11</sup> “Notes”, *Landfall* 20, no. 4 (December 1966), 311, and the immediate, more detailed impressions in his journal entry for 16 August 1966: Charles Brasch, *Journal, 1958-1973*, selected with an introduction and notes by Peter Simpson (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2018), 408-409.

<sup>12</sup> Brasch purchased items 57, 66 and 72, two of Onakaka (1 watercolour, 1 oil) and one of Riverton (a watercolour), and was also “to collect” item 64, which he presumably owned. The elusive *Trees at Totaranui* (no. 49) is recorded as sold to “Mr Don Reid” who had also lent a portrait (*Miss Reid*, no. 67).

- <sup>13</sup> Vincent O’Sullivan, “‘Brief Permitted Morning’—Notes on the Poetry of Charles Brasch.” *Landfall* 92 (December 1969), 338-353. Ian Wedde’s review of *Home Ground (Islands 13, Spring 1975, v. 4 no. 3, 315-327)* doesn’t mention the “Lusk” poems.
- <sup>14</sup> *Home Ground* (Christchurch: Caxton Press, 1974), 32-34, and *Collected Poems* (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1984), 183-185, both edited by Brasch’s literary executor, Alan Roddick.
- <sup>15</sup> These questions are partly addressed by the Academy of American Poets, which offers the term *ekphrasis* for the art/poetry relationship. However, this applies more to a purely descriptive translation than creative inspiration or a “new narrative”; <https://poets.org/poems-based-works-art>.
- <sup>16</sup> Brasch, *Journal, 1958-1973*, 417.
- <sup>17</sup> Letter from Charles B[rasch], William Sutton Archive, Robert and Barbara Stewart Library and Archive, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, Box 1, folder 6, item 27; quoted in Pat Unger, *Bill’s story* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2008), 85 and fn. 17.
- <sup>18</sup> The composers, identified from the National Library of New Zealand online catalogue (accessed 26 December 2022) are, in chronological order: David Farquhar, David Griffiths, Bryony Jagger, John Elmsly, Lyell Cresswell, Christopher Blake, Kirsten Strom.
- <sup>19</sup> Kirsten Strom’s 2015 *Moodscenes* composition, which includes just one of the six Brasch poems (“Dark Stream”), is also acknowledged, but not included in this discussion.
- <sup>20</sup> Wikipedia article – Wikipedia contributors, “Bill Sutton (artist),” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Bill\\_Sutton\\_\(artist\)&oldid=1014923678](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Bill_Sutton_(artist)&oldid=1014923678), accessed 6 September 2021.
- <sup>21</sup> Beaven and Banbury, *Landmarks*, 121, in the useful “Chronology and Exhibitions” section.
- <sup>22</sup> Peter Vangioni, “A Fork Lunch and a Drink or Two: Ephemera from the Templar Press 1966-1983,” *NZ Ephemerist*, no. 2 (March 2009), 10-16, 32. The final item from the Templar Press was Sutton’s 1983 magnum opus of hand typesetting, printing and binding 20 copies of his 54-page volume *The Scott Memorial Windows, Christchurch Cathedral*, which documents his commission to design and produce the windows. Vangioni currently operates Sutton’s press as the Kowhai Press.
- <sup>23</sup> “Richmond Heritage: 20 Templar Street Richmond,” *Richmond Community News*, 4 no.5 (Issue 37, June 2006), 1, 5; <http://www.aveburyhouse.co.nz/uploads/4/7/2/0/47203855/rcn-037-june-2006.pdf> (retrieved 24 September 2021). The property was damaged in the 2010/11 earthquakes but has been restored and is now an artist’s residency; see *The Press*, 7 March 2021, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/news/124461252/art-is-once-again-being-created-at-bill-suttons-former-home>.
- <sup>24</sup> Unger, *Bill’s story*, 85, 147.
- <sup>25</sup> Discussed in Roderick Cave, *The Private Press*, 2nd ed. (New York and London: R. R. Bowker, 1983), especially pp.212-232. The Templar Press is not referred to in chapter 22, “Fine Printing Down Under”, pp.284-298.
- <sup>26</sup> Libraries holding copies are: Alexander Turnbull Library (National Library of New Zealand), Christchurch Art Gallery, University of Canterbury, University of Otago (2 copies, 1 in the Hocken Library); Dunedin Public Library. Physical details (from the Alexander Turnbull Library copy) are: size (closed): 260 x 133mm ; typeface: Baskerville, 5 folded sheets (1 blank) of wove paper plus a folded yellow-brown paper cover, hand sewn with 5 stab-holes and a centre knot.
- <sup>27</sup> W.A. (Bill) Sutton to Mr J. Traue, Chief Librarian, 16 February 1982, enclosed with qRPrNZ TEMP BRAS 1966 (Alexander Turnbull Library).
- <sup>28</sup> Commissioned in 1989 by the Radio New Zealand (RNZ) Concert Programme and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra (NZSO). Cresswell’s manuscript score can be purchased or borrowed from SOUNZ: <https://sounz.org.nz/works/10843?locale=en>, or consulted at the Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>29</sup> The world premiere was in Wellington on 23 March 1990, when Cresswell was visiting. A broadcast of the performance (37 minutes) can be heard online at [https://www.rnz.co.nz/audio/player?audio\\_id=20144539](https://www.rnz.co.nz/audio/player?audio_id=20144539) and a spoken introduction by Kenneth Young (recorded in 2015) at <https://www.rnz.co.nz/concert/programmes/resound/audio/201774585/lyell-cresswell-voices-of-ocean-winds-introduction>.



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- <sup>30</sup> New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Wellington Michael Fowler Centre, 23 March 1990. Programme. In Cresswell, Lyell Richard [New Zealand and overseas programmes for concerts featuring compositions by Lyell Cresswell, ca 1980-2000s]. Ephemera Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, Wellington.
- <sup>31</sup> John Button, *Dominion*, 24 March 1990, 6 (“a lack of direction, and a recourse to note spinning”); Lindis Taylor, *Evening Post*, 24 March 1990, 8 (“it is music struggling to find a purpose or a unifying theme”).
- <sup>32</sup> *Sites* (Palmerston North, N.Z.), 22 (1991), 34-53; the Cresswell reference is on pp. 42-43. Reprinted with illustrations in *Canzona*, 1992, 20-34.
- <sup>33</sup> Lyell Cresswell, “Tracing the Lightning Flashes,” in *Finding Language: The Massey University Composer Addresses*, ed. Michael Brown and Norman Meehan, with Robert Hoskins (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2017), 60-73. Text of an address delivered at the Regent Theatre, Palmerston North, on 31 October 2000.
- <sup>34</sup> Personal communication, 17 February and 10/12 October 2021, and from the SOUNZ Centre for New Zealand Music website: <https://sounz.org.nz/contributors/1046?locale=en>. The work was first performed on 2 October 1994 by David Griffiths (baritone), Nicola May (clarinet), David Jenkins (cello), Christine Cuming (piano) at the University of Auckland International Music Day Concert, and subsequently in 2007 and 2009 (twice); information from SOUNZ website: <https://sounz.org.nz/works/14024?locale=en>:
- <sup>35</sup> *Charms & knots* (Auckland, Atoll Records, 2011) CD-ROM ACD 149, tracks 1-16. The accompanying booklet notes the original performance by baritone Richard Phillips. Copies of the CD can be bought or borrowed from SOUNZ: <https://sounz.org.nz/works/20634?locale=en>.
- <sup>36</sup> Performed by the Dorian Choir conducted by Peter Godfrey in 1981. A Radio New Zealand recording and copies of the handwritten score are available from SOUNZ: <https://sounz.org.nz/works/11599>.
- <sup>37</sup> The Ogen Trio, *Ahi* (Auckland: Atoll Records, 2008), CD-ROM ACD 108, tracks 9-14 (17 minutes); the accompanying booklet includes the words of the six poems. Copies of the typeset score and CD can be borrowed from SOUNZ: <https://sounz.org.nz/works/14024?locale=en#loan-information>.