The British Art Section of the 1906–1907 New Zealand International Exhibition: Its Complexities and Contributions to New Zealand's Art History

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Abstract
The British Art Section of the 1906–7 New Zealand International Exhibition in Christchurch remains the largest exhibition of British art in New Zealand history. However, its cultural impact has been little explored in art history scholarship. This article addresses contrasting interpretations of the section by examining its origins, purchases and legacies, reconsidering and recontextualising previous analysis by art historians Linda Tyler and Warren Feeney. The success of the section neither devastated nor revitalised the work of local artists, but instead reinforced the continued importance of purchasing British art for New Zealand and the pivotal role it played in shaping this country's nascent art collections.

Figure 1. New Zealand International Exhibition, Christchurch, 1906–7, British Art Section—Oil Paintings. Photo: Sir Isidore Spielmann, *The British Government Exhibit at the New Zealand International Exhibition (1906–1907)* (London: British Government Committee, 1908), 32.

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Introduction

The British Art Section of the 1906–7 New Zealand International Exhibition in Christchurch (fig. 1) remains the largest exhibition of British art in New Zealand's history, featuring almost 2,000 artworks shipped directly from London for the occasion. Organised by the British government, a principal motivation of the exhibition was to educate colonial viewers on what "good" art was within the Empire, and to cater to a market of middle-class art buyers nostalgic for "Home." The exhibition of popular British artists left an indelible impression on visitors, along with a lasting impact on New Zealand art history after it closed. Nearly 600 works were purchased, with £17,000 spent by art societies in Christchurch, Wellington, Auckland and Dunedin, by the Art Gallery of New South Wales and the Art Gallery of South Australia, and by numerous private collectors. Although these acquisitions are of considerable significance for the development of public art collections in Australasia, their impact has been little explored in recent New Zealand art history scholarship. The two art historians who have written in any detail on the British Art Section, Linda Tyler and Warren Feeney, disagree on its contribution and the effects it had on the development of a local New Zealand art. Tyler argues that the success of the British Art Section led to an "irrational enthusiasm for British and European painting . . . with the work of New Zealand painters being viewed disparagingly,"[1] which Feeney considers to be an argument for a "devastating effect on the development of New Zealand art."[2] Contrary to Tyler's position, Feeney argues that the British Art Section "created considerable interest in the work of local artists."[3] So, what effect did the exhibition have on the development of New Zealand art history? This article will address the controversy over the British Art Section by first examining its origins and the artworks purchased from it, followed by a discussion of its legacy within New Zealand. In contributing to the literature on the British Art Section, this article will mitigate the polarised positions of both Tyler and Feeney by arguing that it neither devastated nor revitalised the work of local artists, but instead cultivated an interest in the works of British artists amongst the public and had a pivotal role in shaping nascent New Zealand public and private art collections.

The New Zealand International Exhibition, Christchurch

International exhibitions were a popular cultural feature of the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries after the enormous success of London's Great Exhibition in 1851. Exhibitions in New Zealand provided a unique opportunity for the young colony to determine "deliberately and consciously" how to represent itself to the world.[4] Beginning with the New Zealand Exhibition, held in Dunedin in 1865, a mixture of smaller, regional industrial exhibits and international exhibits occurred throughout the 1880s and 1890s. The first exhibition of the new century was the New Zealand International Exhibition, and it was the largest and most successful in terms of attendance, attracting almost two million visitors. Held in purpose-built structures in Hagley Park, Christchurch (fig. 2), the exhibition ran from 1 November 1906 to 15 April 1907 and was unique in being the first organised and fully funded by the government. It was organised at the behest of Premier Richard Seddon "as a way of proclaiming New Zealand's distinctiveness and imminent greatness" as part of the British Empire.[5] Sir Joseph Ward, who became Premier after Seddon's untimely death in June 1906, wanted to raise New Zealand's international profile. Reinforcing the strong sense of unity of the British Empire promulgated by the exhibition, Ward enthusiastically supported New Zealand's new Dominion status only months after the exhibition closed. New Zealand's court was the largest and featured multiple trade, industrial and agricultural displays from a variety of exhibitors representing regional differences and advances, while the contents of other courts were arranged by the governments of Empire siblings—Canada, Fiji and the Australian states New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. "Mother" Britain occupied the second largest court.

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Figure 2. Francis Dutch, *Exhibition Building, Christchurch,* 1906. Gelatin silver print. Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

Historian Jock Phillips has discussed how the exhibition helped to define a New Zealand national identity and argued that it was used to showcase seven key themes: New Zealand was a material "land of abundance"; scenically the "most beautiful country in the world," in an appeal to tourists; the "social laboratory of the world," following the government's progressive welfare legislation; the "Britain of the South," a "British country, loyal to the Empire"; a "man's country," extolling the virile virtues of its manhood; a "Maoriland," with a unique and ancient Māori history; and finally a nation filled with "a respectable people."[6] A Māori exhibit, Te Araiteuru Pā, also featured as an idealised ethnographic display, typical of international exhibitions of the period.[7] The portrayal of Māori by exhibition organisers was intended to celebrate New Zealand's cultural progress. However, Māori were in constant negotiation with the exhibition space and defined their own presentation in it, visiting in large numbers and travelling from around the country to do so.[8] There was the popular fairground section, aptly named "Wonderland," and many other diversions, but the Art Gallery was the key cultural element. Fine arts displays were an important feature at international exhibitions, both to demonstrate a nation's cultural wealth and to educate visitors. The Art Gallery suggested that "Seddon intended that New Zealand should punch above its weight in terms of high culture as in everything else."[9]

The Art Gallery

The Art Gallery was located at the rear of the main exhibition building and consisted of two central galleries with five smaller adjoining galleries on each side (fig. 3). Out of the 12 rooms, three were dedicated to New Zealand and Australian artists, while nine housed the British Art Section. The Colonial Art Section featured 355 artworks, predominantly oil paintings, from 100 Australasian artists.[10] It was one-seventh the size of the British Art Section and considered to be of minor artistic consequence as it "did not truly reflect the development of Australasian art."[11] The artworks were all recently created and sent to Christchurch by art societies throughout New Zealand and Australia, which were each allotted limited space within the gallery. Moreover, "the irony . . . was that the most significant showings of New Zealand art were not found in the art galleries, but in the Tourist Department and the West Coast Courts."[12]

Art historian and curator Rebecca Rice has charted the display and development of colonial art exhibits at New Zealand's international exhibitions, and argues that while New Zealand art was on display, it had the "fluctuating, often problematic, status" of being considered as "both 'information' and as 'art.'"[13] Hanging throughout the regional and government courts of the exhibition, the government (particularly Department of Tourist and Health Resorts manager Thomas Donne) used paintings by New Zealand artists "to provide literal advertisement of the country and its indigenous inhabitants" to its national and international visitors, instead of supporting the development of a "specific style of New Zealand art."[14] By focusing on the descriptive aspects of art in representing New Zealand, these paintings became another tourist and trade commodity to sell the country to the world, with the corollary effect being that the British Art Section became the "real" art in the exhibition.

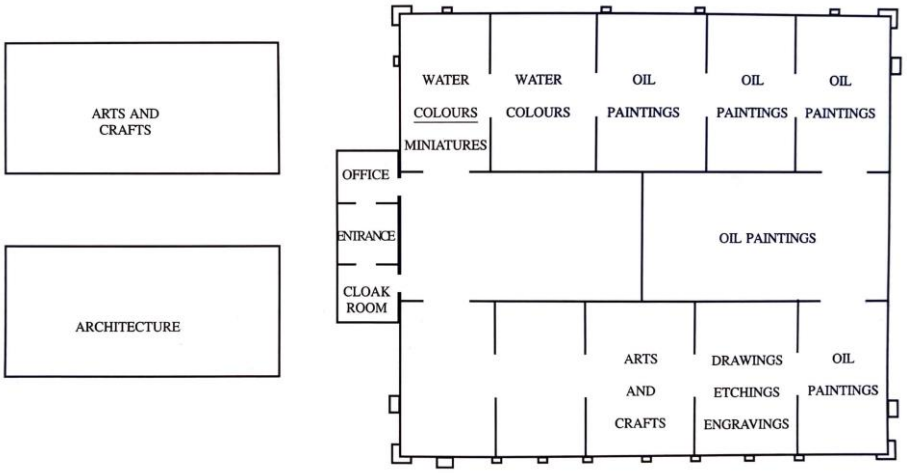

Figure 3. Plan of the British Art Section.
Photo: Spielmann, *The British Government Exhibit*, 30.

In historian James Cowan's *Official Record of the New Zealand International Exhibition of Arts and Industries*, published in 1910, he declared that "the gallery-display has taught many New-Zealanders the value of a good picture; it has raised the whole tone of art in the colony."[15] In the Colonial Art Section, however, "there was a great deal of honest artistic work throughout the rooms . . . but inevitably the lustre of the New Zealand artists was dimmed by the glory of form and colour that filled the adjoining British gallery."[16] Cowan's attitude is echoed in the few accounts of the Colonial Art Section published while the exhibition was running, which suggests a distinct lack of interest and publicity in newspapers nationwide. Throughout November 1906, Dunedin's *Evening Star* published a series of seven articles covering art in the exhibition written by its own unnamed reporter. The first six articles covered different aspects of the British Art Section, while the seventh and final reported on the Colonial Art Section:

> This is devoted to the 118 paintings from Australia and the 237 produced in New Zealand. Please do not, in this connection, say anything about the Lord Mayor's show and the costermonger's cart.[17] The simile would be unfair. It is not such a terrible "come down" to the colonial collection. Each presents one characteristic—it does not include the best . . . The gallery generally gives the idea that the works have been chosen with a view to sale rather than to illustrate the highest conceptions of art. Comparisons of any kind would therefore be unfair.[18]

The writer assumes that their readers will expect to find inferior art on display when compared with the exhibition of British art in adjoining rooms. Through these contemporary accounts and Rice's research, it is evident that the Colonial Art Section was used not so much to showcase the work of New Zealand artists, but to illustrate the country's cultural and national characteristics. This construction ensures that British art was purer and framed as the "good" and "proper" art for consumption by New Zealand audiences.

It was acknowledged by Exhibition Chairman, George Munro, that the Colonial Art Section would form a "subordinate feature" of the Art Gallery, as British artworks were to be used as the main drawcard: "we want to bring people here . . . to show them what they have never seen before."[19] The British Art Section was organised by civil engineer and art connoisseur Sir Isidore Spielmann and featured 1,826 oils, watercolours, etchings, prints, drawings, miniatures, sculptures, architectural drawings and Arts and Crafts exhibits.[20] Spielmann stated that he felt "the responsibility of acting single-handed in a matter of National importance," and worked quickly to organise the British Art Section in only seven months.[21] He had previous experience organising art sections for international exhibitions on behalf of the British government, including the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in 1904 at St Louis where New Zealand had its own court. Spielmann's artistic tastes were rather conservative, however, and were "guided by the more knowledgeable Marion," his younger brother, a prominent Victorian art critic and editor of the *Magazine of Art*.[22] They both espoused the ideals of art conveyed by writer and philosopher John Ruskin, and the concept of a national British art was of great importance to them. Through his selections, Spielmann "attempted to generate nationalist ideas for a modern British art which circumvented continental influence," by selecting art which "showed genuine English characteristics in their styles and moral approach."[23] Artworks were predominantly exhibited by members of traditional art academies and societies across Britain. Spielmann was aided by presidents of Britain's various art societies, particularly Royal Academy President Sir Edward Poynter, in his selections.[24] Furthermore, unlike the other international exhibitions Spielmann had organised, only 36 private owners loaned their artworks to Christchurch; all other exhibits were for sale. He therefore "purposely selected works that were of moderate dimensions and . . . moderate in price" to facilitate sales of work to the New Zealand public and civic galleries.[25]

The British Art Section was an extremely popular feature of the exhibition, with an aggregate attendance of over one and a half million visitors.[26] Spielmann did not travel to New Zealand and instead appointed artist Alfred Appleby Longden as his representative, overseeing the Art Gallery and sales.[27] The exhibition layout was predetermined in London before being sent to Christchurch and arranged in rooms based on medium. The gallery rooms were "covered with a well-shrunk scrim of a dull red colour" and decorated with a frieze designed and largely painted by Arts and Crafts artist and designer Walter Crane, reused after its first presentation at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition.[28] Entering the first room of the British Art Section (fig. 4), presided over by a bust of Ruskin, visitors were met with walls covered in watercolours by the likes of Ernest Waterlow, Edward Burne-Jones and Hercules Brabazon Brabazon. A large display case in the middle of the room housed the exhibition's entire miniature collection. The next room was also lined with watercolours, while the third marked the start of the oil painting collection, and visitors were at first greeted by Tennyson Cole's portrait of Seddon, aptly adorned with a black curtain (fig. 5). The fourth room was lined with oil paintings, as was the fifth, with William Holman Hunt's *The Light of the World* (1900–04) placed in prime position at the end of the gallery space. This famous painting had already toured New Zealand earlier in 1906, and proved so popular that it was brought back specifically for the exhibition. The next adjoining room was the largest and featured arguably the most significant academic

paintings and sculpture by Hamo Thornycroft, Frederic Leighton and Gilbert Bayes. Unfortunately, due to the distance that sculptures needed to travel across rough seas, only small pieces were selected, limiting the examples to "busts, statuettes and ideal figures of moderate size."[29] The next room was smaller and filled with the remaining oil collection, leading into the black and white room, featuring almost exclusively drawings and prints. The final room of the British Art Section was devoted to small Arts and Crafts pieces, while the larger pieces were exhibited in the annex of the British Government Court along with a selection of drawings and prints. Arts and crafts were exhibited in the British Art Section for only the second time in an industrial exhibition and their success in Christchurch was considerable.[30] They introduced New Zealand audiences to the Arts and Crafts Movement and proved immensely popular.[31] Three hundred and twenty-one Arts and Crafts pieces were purchased, including by the Canterbury Society of Arts (CSA) and by English-born Australian artist, Harry Pelling Gill, on behalf of the Art Gallery of South Australia as its honorary curator.

Figures 4–5. British Art Section—Watercolours and Miniatures (above); Oil Paintings (below). Photos: Spielmann, *The British Government Exhibit*, 41, 155.

Thematically, the artworks conformed to genres typical of Victorian art and followed a traditional hierarchy of subject matter. There was a particular focus on landscape and genre scenes thought to appeal to colonial audiences. Both English and Scottish landscapes were well represented as exemplars of the British school of painting. However, as Christchurch was a city with close English affiliations, English landscapes sold in larger numbers than Scottish.[32] Early and important Scottish works by James Guthrie, *A Highland Funeral* and *The Goose Girl ("To Pastures New")*, were loaned by the Corporations of Glasgow and Aberdeen respectively, the first time either painting had left the country. There were a number of fishing scenes by Newlyn artists, such as Walter Langley's *A Woman's Part* and Henry Scott Tuke's *Summer Evening*. The British response to French Barbizon and Impressionist-influenced paintings was represented by George Clausen and Henry La Thangue. Women artists such as Helen Allingham, Ethel Walker, mother and daughter Laura and Anna Alma-Tadema, Flora Reid and Henrietta Rae were also displayed throughout the British Art Section, albeit in much smaller numbers than men. Although the exhibit received an overwhelmingly positive public response, in his review of the British Art Section, the newly-appointed Director of the Canterbury College School of Art, Robert Herdman-Smith, lamented the absence of paintings by the more progressive John Singer Sargent, Frank Brangwyn, Walter Sickert or James Whistler, which in his opinion made the selection less than fully representative of a British school of art.[33] The most revered pictures were traditional portraits by Royal Academy presidents: Frederic Leighton's *Teresina* (fig. 7), Edward Poynter's *Asterié* and John Millais's *Clarissa*. Victorian Neoclassical paintings were exhibited, including Ernest Normand's *Pandora* and Solomon J. Solomon's *Psyche*. Artworks of popular imperial interest were also shown, such as George Haité's *Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee Procession Passing the Houses of Parliament* (purchased by the Art Gallery of New South Wales), Ernest Crofts' *The Funeral of Her Late Majesty Queen Victoria* and John Bacon's *Homage-Giving: Westminster Abbey*. Personal etchings made by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert shortly after their wedding were also exhibited in the black and white section. Spielmann declared in his report on the British Art Section that he had acted "with the object of serving the interests of British Art and of testing the result of the introduction of a strong display of British Art into one of our Colonies."[34]

Figure 6. British Art Section—Oil Paintings.
Photo: Spielmann, *The British Government Exhibit*, 33.

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Figure 7. Frederic Leighton, *Teresina*, c. 1874. Oil on canvas board, 604 x 495 mm. Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū. Presented by the Canterbury Society of Arts, 1932.

Purchases by New Zealand's Art Societies and Galleries

Premier Sir Joseph Ward's remarks about the British Art Section in his address at the exhibition's opening ceremony were laudatory:

> There has never been within the walls of any picture gallery such a magnificent display of art as is to be found within the walls of that gallery. There are here already people who have come for the special purpose of making a selection of these pictures with a view to purchasing. New Zealanders ought to toe the mark and not allow these pictures to be sold and leave our shores.[35]

New Zealanders did indeed take full advantage of the opportunity provided and were rapacious in their purchasing. A precedent for purchasing artworks from an international exhibition in support of New Zealand galleries was set at the 1889–90 Dunedin and South Seas Exhibition in Dunedin, which was held to mark fifty years of the colony. A British art display was

organised by lawyer and artist William Hodgkins to help the Otago Art Society build a gallery to house its public collection. Pre-existing collections of artworks were gathered from British art dealers and the exhibit included the loan of some of the British pictures shown at Melbourne's Centennial International Exhibition (1888–89).[36] Two hundred and thirty-six artworks were sold at the exhibition, including, most significantly, four paintings purchased by a group of private Dunedin citizens to gift to the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, three of which remain in the gallery's collection today. New Zealand had begun to "demonstrate its cultural development" through the establishment of art societies in New Zealand's main centres, each aiming to build galleries in a bid to civilise and educate their respective regions.[37] Until the 1906–7 exhibition, it was generally up to private collectors to lend their works to local art society exhibitions to provide "that foreign element of colour and atmosphere so dear to those who, unable to travel, may then enjoy at second-hand the delights of a new experience."[38] The British Art Section marked the most significant single opportunity for art societies to add to their developing collections. They tried to raise as much money as possible to purchase as many artworks as possible, in conscious competition with each other, in a manner which art writer Gordon Brown later described as "like a kid's lolly scramble."[39]

The exhibition was of enormous significance to the CSA, which purchased 24 artworks, all of them gifted to the Robert McDougall Art Gallery in 1932 when that institution was founded. They remain in the Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū collection today. The Society had been enormously successful in raising £2,000 to purchase works at the exhibition by the creation of a debenture scheme, whereby members of the public purchased one out of 40 debentures of £50 each, earning 4.5% interest per annum on their investment.[40] The Society took great advantage of the exhibition being staged in their city and held frequent special meetings to discuss potential purchases. The first one was held two days before the exhibition opened to the public on 29 October 1906, when it was decided to purchase Alfred Drury's bronze bust *The Age of Innocence* and the oil paintings *Sunlight Through the Leaves* by Lucy Kemp-Welch, *Psyche* by Solomon, *Doubts* by Rae and *Teresina* by Leighton. These choices clearly indicate the gravitas of the collection they were trying to build for Christchurch. *Teresina* is a small, idealised portrait of an Italian model painted by the late Royal Academy President. It was an obvious choice for the Society, which had written to Leighton in 1886 asking for his assistance in selecting "a sea piece, a figure subject and a landscape . . . suitable for the study of advanced students" for their collection.[41] *Psyche* was considered "in the opinion of experts the finest example of flesh-painting" to be found, while *Doubts* was undoubtedly "a good 'gallery' picture."[42] A further special meeting was held two weeks later on 11 November 1906 when it was decided to purchase the watercolours *We've been in the meadows all day* by William Lee Hankey, *In Shelter* by Robert Allan and *On the Moors, Kyles of Bute* by William Eyre Walker. George Dunlop Leslie's oil painting *In the Wizard's Garden* (fig. 8) was also selected at this meeting, but later entered the Society's collection as the gift of former Dunedin merchant and friend to many leading British artists, Wolf Harris, after he donated £200 specifically requesting the honour of funding the purchase.[43] This donation was used to purchase Bertram Priestman's *A Sunny Afternoon* and George Houston's *Winter in the Highlands*. Finally, seven miniatures were purchased, together with Charles Hartwell's bronze statuette *The Lass of Dee* and three Arts and Crafts exhibits—Florence Kingsford's illustrated manuscript, Harold Speed's *First Design for Fresco "Autumn" Painted on the Wall of the Refreshment Room, Royal Academy* and a bronze relief, *Jason Ploughing the Acre of Mars*, by Gilbert Bayes.[44] At the close of the exhibition, the CSA had spent the largest sum by a New Zealand art society on the British Art Section (second only to the Art Gallery of New South Wales), with a total expenditure of £2,442 10s.[45]

Figure 8. George Dunlop Leslie, *In the Wizard's Garden*, c. 1904. Oil on canvas, 1536 x 1155 mm. Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū. Presented to the Canterbury Society of Arts by Wolf Harris, 1907; presented to the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch, 1932.

The New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts was New Zealand's next largest spender at the British Art Section, after the Government provided them with a £500 subsidy "on a pound-for-pound basis to encourage subscriptions toward buying pictures for a permanent gallery collection."[46] The Wellington community was able to raise £800 towards the purchase of pictures, leaving the Academy with a total of £1,300. However, unlike the CSA, not all funds were directed to purchase works in Christchurch. The £800 raised was forwarded to the expatriate New Zealand artist Frances Hodgkins, together with Norman Garstin and Frank Morley Fletcher to act as official buyers for the Academy and select works directly in London.[47] In November 1906, Academy President Walter Fell and council member Thomas Kennedy Macdonald travelled to Christchurch to make their selection of three oil paintings and two watercolours. George Harcourt's *A Wanderer* was considered by Macdonald to be "the most important picture . . . secured," a picture of a travelling woman standing at the edge of a dark forest, as the portrayal of firelight and its reflections were "portrayed in a remarkably masterful manner" which would "delight every artist" who sees it.[48] James Coutts-Michie's pastoral scene *Eventide* was the second oil painting to be chosen, followed by the rather pitiful subject picture, Flora Reid's *Poor Motherless Bairns*. The selected watercolours were landscapes rather different in style, Robert Coventry's *On the Canal* and George Haité's *View from Richmond*

Hill. Early 1907 brought a change of leadership to the Academy, and magistrate Herbert Samuel Wardell, after visiting the exhibition in April 1907, returned "full of enthusiasm for a painting by the popular Frederick Hall," *The Result of High Living* (fig. 9).[49] The rather humorous work depicts a Cavalier King Charles spaniel about to receive medicine in order to heal the "discomfort caused by a life of luxury."[50] Artworks were offered to the Academy after the close of the exhibition at reduced prices and Wardell completed the purchase of *The Result of High Living*, though without the approval of the entire council.[51]

Figure 9. Frederick Hall, *The Result of High Living*, 1892. Oil on canvas, 1524 x 1219 mm. Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. Gift of the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts, 1936.

Auckland City Council Mayor Arthur M. Myers travelled to Christchurch to visit the exhibition and, on his return, spoke to the Mackelvie trustees, suggesting "that they should anticipate their income if necessary, and take advantage of the opportunity afforded to purchase good works of art at a reasonable figure."[52] Myers had already purchased a watercolour to gift to the Auckland City Art Gallery while at the exhibition, so was an obvious advocate for the benefits of purchasing British artworks for Auckland.[53] He apparently received a less than satisfactory response from the trustees and so, at the next Council meeting, moved to "vote a sum of £500 for the purchase of works of art" for the Auckland City Art Gallery collection, which was almost unanimously supported.[54] Edward William Payton, the first director of the Elam School of Art, travelled to Christchurch the following week and purchased two oil paintings and two watercolours. It was reported that he immediately chose Thomas Kennington's *Serena, Found of Savages*, which depicts a scene from Edmund Spenser's epic poem *The Faerie Queene*. Payton reserved Joseph Pickering's oil landscape *The Abbey Farm* together with watercolours

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On the Hill Top by Alfred Parsons and *The Fisherman's Farewell* by John Robertson Reid, all of which he later purchased.[55] When interviewed by the Auckland *Star* about the Gallery's new pictures, Payton said that he felt "sure that the Auckland people have got full value for the £500 I expended on their behalf. I am perfectly satisfied that both from an artistic and also from a public point of view the purchases are all right. Each picture I have got has good artistic value, and is still calculated to suit the taste of the general public."[56]

The timing of the exhibition was inopportune for the Otago Art Society as they struggled to raise money for art purchases. Throughout the course of the exhibition the *Otago Daily Times* reported purchases made by New Zealand's other art societies and regularly impressed upon its readers the importance of securing works for Dunedin. However, "unfortunately, circumstances conspired to leave Dunedin decidedly out in the cold in this matter of the acquisition of pictures."[57] The Society's money had already been set aside for the construction of a new gallery in Logan Park and they had been regularly appealing to the public for subscriptions to the Building Fund of the Public Art Gallery.[58] The Society did, however, create an Exhibition Pictures Fund in March 1907 and urged the Otago public to raise funds for the purchase of pictures, itself donating £25.[59] Donors were few and the Fund realised just £121 9s. It was recorded that "with such a small sum it was not possible to purchase any works of importance, but two watercolours and an etching were secured."[60] These were *Among the Hills, Barmouth* by Edward Davies, "a very fine, strong picture of mountain scenery," *A Yorkshire Pastoral* by Claude Hayes and Charles Holroyd's etching *Cypress Trees near Siena*.[61] The financial limitations on the ability to purchase works from the British Art Section by the Society was widely lamented. The British Commissioner of the exhibition, Captain Percy Atkin, even wrote to the Dunedin City Council undertaking to "discuss with the various owners … the possibility of obtaining a gift of pictures to Dunedin" upon his return to Britain.[62] While Dunedin's purchases from the British Art Section were modest, the artworks of the British Art Section were considered sufficiently important that government officials would ask for British artists and collectors to donate works to aid New Zealand art societies.

Effects of the British Art Section on New Zealand's Artistic Development

Art historians have disagreed over the impact of the British Art Section and its acquisitions by New Zealand's art societies. Tyler's essay, "Art for Empire: Paintings in the British Art Exhibit," in the book *Farewell Colonialism: The New Zealand International Exhibition Christchurch, 1906–07*, provides the most comprehensive overview and analysis of the British Art Section yet published, discussing the conservative nature of the exhibits and resulting purchases. Published in 1998 following a 1995 Stout Research Centre conference examining the exhibition, *Farewell Colonialism* collated the leading scholarship on it at that time, analysing all its facets. Tyler argued that although the "British Art Exhibit was intended to improve the production and reception of art in New Zealand," it instead "had the opposite effect."[63] Moreover, she considers that Spielmann "treated the Fine Arts section like a version of the Royal Academy for overseas consumption,"[64] and the resulting purchases indicated "a colonial retention of Victorian morality and taste."[65] This opinion corresponds with an unpublished research paper Tyler produced 15 years earlier entitled "Imperial Art: British Painting in the New Zealand International Exhibition 1906–7," which discusses the artistic genres on display in Christchurch. She argues that Spielmann's aim of "serving the interest of British Art" was realised, as Britain fundamentally impressed upon New Zealanders its "cultural superiority" and "quash[ed] all local manifestations of the desire" for an artistic independence.[66] Consequently, this "irrational enthusiasm" for British art "imbued New Zealand art with a sense of inferiority, and ensured a degree of dependence on British art for the next forty years."[67] Feeney, in the opening pages of his book, *The Radical, the Reactionary*

and the Canterbury Society of Arts 1880–1996, states that Tyler "condemned the CSA's acquisition of £2,442 worth of Royal Academy artworks," referencing her unpublished essay.[68] However, time seemed to soften Tyler's opinion, when she concluded her 1998 essay by saying that ultimately it was "difficult to judge" "whether the popularity of the British Art Exhibition stimulated New Zealanders' interest in art generally and improved market conditions for the sale of local art."[69] Contrary to the impression given by Feeney's gloss on Tyler's argument, this does not appear to be an outright condemnation of the British Art Section's success or colonial cultural cringe.

Feeney has called the exhibition "the most significant exhibition of art, industry and Empire to reach New Zealand," and published several articles in the Christchurch *Press* in the early 2000s on the significance of the works purchased in 1906–7 and the value of Victorian art held within New Zealand's civic collections.[70] When discussing the impact of the British Art Section on New Zealand's art history, Feeney has viewed it from a Canterbury perspective, as his research focuses predominantly on the history and influence of the CSA and the arts in Canterbury. He disagrees with other scholars on the shifting impact of art societies in the development of New Zealand art in general, declaring that "the assertion that the CSA . . . impeded cultural development could not be more inaccurate."[71] In a direct rebuttal of Tyler's argument, Feeney evidences the significant number of purchases of New Zealand art from the Society's annual exhibition towards the end of 1907, which even surprised Council members.[72] More importantly, however, he argues that the purchase of British art from the exhibition helped the development of New Zealand art, as the works were purchased for the benefit of New Zealand artists in terms of education, and for the development of public taste. Pre-empting the question of if, indeed, the Society was trying to promote fine arts in New Zealand, "why had it spent such a comparatively large sum on these overseas acquisitions," Feeney argues that the Society felt that the promotion of good art in New Zealand could "best be realised with a public collection of works of the highest aesthetic quality," which it believed were "unquestionably to be acquired from the Royal Academy."[73] This comment, however, serves as a reminder of the limitations of the vision of New Zealand art societies at this time, whose sights were set firmly on the work of British Royal Academicians.

The differences in perspective between Tyler and Feeney show regional variations. In contrast to Feeney's focus on Christchurch, Tyler wrote of the detrimental effects of the British Art Section felt by the Auckland Society of Artists at their annual exhibition held at the end of April 1907.[74] A reporter of the time, upon viewing the exhibition, saw that there was "something of a deterioration in the quality of the work shown . . . the elder working members have apparently been subject to a spell of weariness, not at all unnatural, and there is less ambition shown than one remembers for quite a number of years past."[75] This weariness did not appear to last, however, as the following year's exhibition "proved the most successful ever held . . . both from an artistic and financial point of view."[76] But were New Zealand artists made to feel inferior, with members of the press judging the quality of their works in comparison to British art, and did the reception of their artworks suffer by being shown alongside galleries full of the work of Royal Academicians? New Zealand artists who were based overseas remained unimpressed by the British Art Section. Frances Hodgkins, whose own artworks were rejected for the Colonial Art Section, wrote a letter to her mother in January 1907, wondering "why buy pictures for a young colony by derelict artists of bygone time and taste?"[77] What is clear is that no matter how successful the CSA was in selling works by its own artists in the following years, the effect of the British Art Section and New Zealand's continued loyalty to Britain and esteem for British culture led to British art being upheld as the criterion of quality in the visual arts for many years to come.

The British Art Section provided a precedent for the exhibition of contemporary British art in New Zealand and was significant in both reinforcing and revitalising the commitment of New Zealand's art societies to purchase British art for the educational benefit of local artists and public taste. In 1911, the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts received £500 from the Government to purchase pictures as part of a £2,000 grant split equally between the art societies in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin.[78] It was decided that an exhibition of overseas art should be held in Wellington, as opposed to using overseas buyers, in an effort to raise more capital to purchase pictures.[79] The Baillie Exhibition was held in Wellington between May and June 1912 and contained 400 British artworks selected by New Zealand-born and London-based art dealer John Baillie. The Academy spent almost £11,000 on artworks at the Baillie Exhibition which form "part of the founding nucleus of New Zealand's current permanent national collection of paintings."[80] New Zealand's next international exhibition was the 1925–26 New Zealand and South Seas International Exhibition in Dunedin. As with 1906–7, there was an art gallery, although this exhibition also included artworks by American and French artists. Out of the £11,000 spent, almost £8,000 was spent on British art, demonstrating the ongoing preference for British art by New Zealand buyers.[81] Dunedin was far more fortunate on this occasion and able to spend almost £5,000 purchasing works remarkably similar to those on display in Christchurch twenty years earlier, such as Solomon J. Solomon's Victorian neoclassical oil painting *Eros* and Robert Allan's watercolour *Crossing the Ford*.[82] New Zealand also became a member of The Empire Art Loan Collections Society (later the Empire Art Loan Exhibitions Society), whereby British art from London's major art museums was exhibited in New Zealand, Australia and South Africa. Founded by businessman Percy Sargood in 1932, its inaugural exhibition was held in Christchurch in 1934 before travelling to Dunedin, Auckland and Whanganui. Sargood stated that "the idea was conceived of bringing outlying communities of the British Empire into closer touch with 'a greater field of Art' than they, in their isolated positions, could hope for."[83] Further exhibitions of British art were privately organised by Wellington art dealer Edwin Murray Fuller in 1928, 1930 and 1932, while his wife, Mary Murray Fuller, continued their aim to "educate New Zealand artists and art audiences by offering the work of 'eminent' artists . . . from 'Home,'" by organising exhibitions in 1935 and 1936, following her husband's death in 1933.[84] Mary Murray Fuller also arranged the Centennial Exhibition of International Art as part of the 1939–40 New Zealand Centennial Exhibition held in Wellington, where it was seen by a wider national audience than the New Zealand art exhibition as it travelled throughout the country. Though success of this exhibition was hampered by the outbreak of the Second World War, it demonstrates how British artistic tastes were reinforced throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

Conclusion

The success of the British Art Section at the 1906–7 exhibition and resulting purchases of British art solidified a pre-existing taste for conservative, academic art in New Zealand and led to an increased demand for such works. Opinions, notably those of Tyler and Feeney, have differed on the impact the British Art Section had on New Zealand's art history, with Tyler initially declaring that it "quash[ed] all local manifestations of the desire" for an artistic independence,[85] before later softening her stance in deciding that it was in fact "difficult to judge" the overall effect of it on New Zealanders' interest in art.[86] Feeney, meanwhile, used Tyler's earlier arguments to imply her outright condemnation of the British Art Section and its "devastating effect on the development of New Zealand art . . . when local artists and galleries were only beginning to establish a significant presence,"[87] before arguing that the British artworks in the CSA's collection, including those purchased in 1906–7, "elevated the status and confidence of the arts and guaranteed support for the work of local artists."[88] This article

has sought to step aside from these opposing positions by occupying a middle ground. In determining the British Art Section's considerable scope, cultural and educative motivations and the extensive amount of money spent by New Zealand's art societies on their respective purchases, the exhibition neither affected the development of New Zealand art positively or negatively, but instead reaffirmed the importance of purchasing British art for New Zealand and the pivotal role it played in shaping New Zealand's nascent art collections. The success of the British Art Section stimulated a flurry of later exhibitions of British art, brought to New Zealand to educate artists and the public on what "good" art was, as it was widely believed that British art, the art from "Home," represented the "best." "The people responsible for the purchases were obsessed with the work of conservative English . . . artists"[89] and the works were chosen with the best educative intentions for New Zealand, although they did not represent the latest tastes and styles in art at that time. The market for British art in New Zealand was booming and served the economic and cultural interests of British artists well. The British Art Section was hugely successful and Spielmann was extremely proud of his accomplishments. Writing to the *Times* two months after the close of the exhibition, Spielmann drew "attention to the success achieved by the British Art Section," telling its readers of the £17,000 spent on British art in Christchurch:

> This amount is, as far as I am able to judge, the largest ever expended in any art section at any international exhibition; most certainly is this the case as regards recent international exhibitions. The result indicates that there is a growing appreciation of, and demand for, British art in our Colonies, and this indication should be welcome, not merely to British artists, on obvious grounds, but likewise as forging a new and a useful link between the Colonies and the Mother Country.[90]

New Zealand was only too keen to absorb the cultural influence of "Home," and Spielmann was delighted to let British artists and readers know of their achievements, with this "new and useful link" continuing well into the twentieth century.

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[1] Linda Tyler, "Imperial Art: British Painting in the New Zealand International Exhibition 1906–7" (MA research paper, University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts, 1983), n.p.
[2] Warren Feeney, "For Art and Empire," *The Press*, 3 January 2007.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Jock Phillips, "Exhibiting Ourselves: The Exhibition and National Identity," in *Farewell Colonialism: The New Zealand International Exhibition Christchurch, 1906–07*, ed. John Mansfield Thomson (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1998), 17.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid., 21.
[7] See Bernard Kernot, "Maoriland Metaphors and the Model Pa," in *Farewell Colonialism*, 61–78.
[8] See Conal McCarthy, "'Our Works of Ancient Times': History, Colonization, and Agency at the 1906–7 New Zealand International Exhibition," *Museum History Journal* 2, no. 2 (July 2009): 119–41; and Margaret Orbell, "Māori Writing About the Exhibition," in *Farewell Colonialism*, 141–63.
[9] Tom Brooking, *Richard Seddon: King of God's Own: The Life and Times of New Zealand's Longest-Serving Prime Minister* (Auckland: Penguin, 2014), 399.
[10] James Cowan, *Official Record of the International Exhibition of Arts and Industries held at Christchurch, 1906–7: A Descriptive and Historical Account* (Wellington: Government Printer, 1910), 268.
[11] Jane Vial, "New Zealand and Australian Art," in *Farewell Colonialism*, 110–11.
[12] Rebecca Rice, "The State Collections of Colonial New Zealand Art: Intertwined Histories of Collecting and Display" (PhD diss., Victoria University of Wellington, 2010), 211.
[13] Ibid., iii.
[14] Ibid., 290.

[15] Cowan, *Official Record of the International Exhibition*, 267.
[16] Ibid., 268.
[17] Costermongers sold fruit and vegetables from a handcart and travelled from town to town. This is an old British saying which signifies an anticlimactic or disappointing end after an impressive display.
[18] "Exhibition Art Gallery," *Evening Star*, 23 November 1906.
[19] Rice, "The State Collections of Colonial New Zealand Art," 210.
[20] The 1826 total was made up as follows: 233 oil paintings; 209 watercolours; 142 miniatures; 309 black and white drawings and etchings; 83 sculptures; 160 architectural drawings; and 690 Arts and Crafts exhibits.
[21] Isidore Spielmann, *Report upon the Art Section of the British Government Exhibit at the New Zealand International Exhibition, Christchurch, 1906–7* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1907), 5.
[22] Ruth Sebag-Montiefiore, "From Poland to Paddington: The Early History of the Spielmann Family, 1828–1948," *Jewish Historical Studies* 32 (1990): 247.
[23] Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions, and World's Fairs, 1851–1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 212–13.
[24] The art was produced by members of the Royal Academy, the Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolours, the Royal Scottish Academy, the Royal Hibernian Academy, the Royal Society of British Artists, the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers and Engravers, the Royal Scottish Society of Painters in Watercolours, the Royal Institute of British Architects, the Society of British Sculpture, the Royal Society of Miniature Painters, the Society of Miniaturists and the New English Art Club.
[25] Spielmann, 14.
[26] Ibid., 11.
[27] This was Longden's first official appointment as Government representative for Fine and Applied Art. He later became director of the Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museum (1909–1911). He had two watercolours exhibited in the British Art Section, one of which was purchased by a private collector.
[28] Spielmann, *Report upon the Art Section of the British Government Exhibit*, 9–10.
[29] Ibid., 8.
[30] Ibid., 13.
[31] See Ann Calhoun's *Simplicity and Splendour: The Canterbury Arts & Crafts Movement from 1882* (Christchurch: Christchurch Art Gallery, 2004) and *The Arts & Crafts Movement in New Zealand,1870–1940: Women Make Their Mark* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2000).
[32] Linda Tyler, "Art for Empire: Paintings in the British Art Exhibit," in *Farewell Colonialism*, 98.
[33] Robert Herdman-Smith, "British Art Exhibit. Preliminary Notice—The Pictures," *Press*, 1 November 1906, 8.
[34] Spielmann, *Report upon the Art Section of the British Government Exhibit*, 5.
[35] "Hands Across the Sea," *The Press*, 2 November 1906, 8.
[36] "History of the Present Exhibition," *Otago Witness*, 28 November 1889.
[37] Rice, "The State Collections of Colonial New Zealand Art," 88.
[38] Gordon H. Brown, "New Zealand Painting 1900–1920," in *New Zealand Painting 1900–1920: Traditions and Departures* (Wellington: Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand, 1972), 16.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Warren Feeney, *The Radical, the Reactionary and the Canterbury Society of Arts, 1880–1996* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2011), 47.
[41] Ibid., 45.
[42] "Purchases For Christchurch Art Gallery," *The Press*, 10 November 1906.
[43] "News of the Day," *The Press*, 26 April 1907.
[44] The miniatures were Mabel Hankey, *Summer Days*; Maud Worsfold, *In the Garden*; Vere Atmore, *Daughter of Charles I*; Aimee Muspratt, *Reverie*; Evelyn Haig, *Innocence*; Dorothy Darnell, *Damaris*; and Lionel Heath, *Reverie*.
[45] Spielmann, *Report upon the Art Section of the British Government Exhibit*, 15.
[46] Robin Kay and Tony Eden, *Portrait of a Century: The History of the N.Z. Academy of Fine Arts 1882–1982* (Wellington: Millwood Press, 1983), 49.

[47] Jane Vial, "Frances Hodgkins: Art Consultant," in *The Academy's Bequest to the Nation*, ed. Geoff Nees (Wellington: The Academy, 1990), 21.
[48] "Exhibition Pictures," *New Zealand Mail*, 21 November 1906.
[49] Kay and Eden, *Portrait of a Century*, 51.
[50] Tyler, "Art for Empire," 99.
[51] Kay and Eden, *Portrait of a Century*, 51.
[52] "Auckland Art Gallery," *Auckland Star*, 23 November 1906.
[53] Myers purchased Frank Dadd, *First Aid*.
[54] "Auckland Art Gallery," *Auckland Star*.
[55] "Exhibition Gossip," *The Press*, 1 December 1906.
[56] "The Art Gallery," *Auckland Star*, 8 December 1906.
[57] "Pictures From the Exhibition," *Otago Daily Times*, 20 March 1907.
[58] See, for example, "The Public Art Gallery," *Otago Witness*, 25 April 1906.
[59] "Exhibition Pictures," *Otago Daily Times*, 28 March 1907.
[60] "Otago Art Society," *Otago Daily Times*, 18 June 1907.
[61] "Untitled," *Otago Daily Times*, 12 April 1907.
[62] "City Council," *Otago Daily Times*, 14 February 1907.
[63] Tyler, "Art for Empire," 102.
[64] Ibid., 99–100.
[65] Ibid., 102.
[66] Tyler, "Imperial Art," n.p.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Feeney, *The Radical, the Reactionary and the Canterbury Society of Arts*, 7.
[69] Tyler, "Art for Empire," 103.
[70] Feeney, "For Art and Empire."
[71] Feeney, *The Radical, the Reactionary*, 7.
[72] The Report and Balance Sheet of the CSA for the year ending 31 December 1906 states: "It was anticipated that after the heavy sales of Works of Art at the N.Z. International Exhibition, our sales would necessarily suffer, but it was soon discovered that the Exhibition was to be quite a record in this matter as reference to the accounts will show."
[73] Feeney, *The Radical, the Reactionary*, 45.
[74] Tyler, "Imperial Art," n.p.
[75] "Auckland Society of Arts," *Auckland Star*, 27 April 1907, 7.
[76] "Society of Arts," *New Zealand Herald*, 15 June 1908, 7.
[77] Tyler, "Art for Empire," 102.
[78] Tony Mackle, "The Enterprising John Baillie, Artist, Art Dealer and Entrepreneur," *Tuhinga* 28 (2017): 67.
[79] Kay and Eden, *Portrait of a Century*, 54.
[80] Mackle, "The Enterprising John Baillie," 62.
[81] G.E. Thompson, *Official Record of the New Zealand and South Seas International Exhibition Dunedin—1925–1926* (Dunedin: Otago Master Printers' Association, 1926), 107.
[82] Ibid.
[83] P.R. Sargood, "Foreword," in *Souvenir Illustrated Catalogue of the first Loan Collection of Contemporary British Art Organised by The Empire Art Loan Collections Society*, 1934.
[84] Ann Calhoun, "Two Wellington Entrepreneurs of the Thirties: The Murray Fullers I: Edwin Murray Fuller," *Art New Zealand*, no. 23 (Autumn 1982), https://art-newzealand.com/23-fullers/.
[85] Tyler, "Imperial Art," n.p.
[86] Tyler, "Art for Empire," 103.
[87] Feeney, "For Art and Empire."
[88] Warren Feeney, "Value of the Victorians," *The Press*, 10 August 2005.
[89] Kay and Eden, *Portrait of a Century*, 56.
[90] Isidore Spielmann, "British Art at the New Zealand Exhibition," *The Times*, 23 July 1907, 8.