

whangarei art museum

te manawa toi

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WOOLLASTON

THE WALLACE ARTS TRUST COLLECTION 1931-1996
APRIL 24- 3 JULY 2016



The Whangarei Art Museum are pleased to present an exhibition showcasing the remarkable collection of works by Sir Mountford Toss will Woollaston from the Wallace Arts Trust.

Born in rural Taranaki in 1910, long and famously resident in the Nelson district, knighted in 1979 for services to the arts, Toss Woollaston was the veteran of the longest, toughest and best-fought battle for recognition ever won by a New Zealand painter against the resistance of an ambivalent Kiwi public. From the early 1930s he led the struggle to gain acceptance for modern art in New Zealand, and through his life and work inspired generations of new artists to follow his example.

In 1995 the James Wallace Arts Trust acquired an unparalleled collection of works of art by Woollaston, then widely acknowledged as New Zealand's greatest living painter. The group of works included paintings and drawings representing high points in the artist's achievement over six decades of his career from 1931 to 1994. Following this magnificent acquisition the Trust continued to acquire key works by Woollaston, including major late works, compiling what was in Woollaston's own assessment the most comprehensive representation of his oeuvre held together in any single collection. More important masterpieces have been added to the collection since the death of the artist, including his last completed and signed work, the magnificent *Male Nude* of 1996, which shows that Woollaston was painting at the height of his powers almost to the very end of his long life.

While the Wallace collection of works by Woollaston covers the whole of his long career, it is especially strong in late masterpieces by the artist, painted after

the death of his beloved wife Edith Woollaston in 1987. At this time Woollaston was radically reassessing his career and moving his painting in bold new directions. After a lifetime of hardship, in the 1980s and '90s he achieved public accolade and financial success, and entered a glamorous new phase of his life when he moved regularly between the USA and New Zealand. Powerful portraits and sensational landscapes resulted from this late burst of energy from Toss's brush. Woollaston's acute eye for the ever-changing effects of light and colour as they play on the architecture of landforms and on the bodies of the people he loved are nowhere more in evidence than in his late masterpieces in the Wallace Arts Trust Collection.

A special feature of the exhibition is the sequence of over 80 studies of 'Erua', a Greymouth schoolboy whom Woollaston employed as a model in the early 1960s. 'Erua' (a pseudonym chosen to protect the young man's identity) was Maori and his strongly Polynesian features intrigued the artist as a challenge to his observational abilities and draughtsmanship. Many of the drawings Toss produced over the two-year period in which he had Erua as a model were reproduced in a book, entitled *Erua*, in 1966. The Wallace Arts Trust acquired 80 of these drawings in 2014 and this is the first time after nearly 40 years that the majority of the **Erua** sequence will be shown together.

Image Credit: TM Woollaston, *Kina, from Harleys road, 1993*, oil on board, The Wallace Arts Trust Rutherford Trust Collection

Developed and Toured by The Wallace Arts Trust with support from Creative New Zealand



Visitor Information:

OPEN Daily – 10am -4 pm
Closed Christmas Day | Boxing Day | Good Friday

Press Enquires:

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