10/18/1004:52:42 PM

The Abstraction of Place.

Beginnings: Geoff Tune has been working as a painter for over forty years in his own style of abstraction that largely avoids representation but references specific places with personal associations. There is a reflective quality to the works and a consistent evolution and use of symbols like the circle, square and triangle to convey his meanings and thoughts. Research and thought lie behind the final images that have been produced without much concern for commercial return. Tune has never actively promoted his work to the wider public, especially in recent years, meaning that its range and development are little known. Also, he has shown his work at Gisborne, Whitianga and Howick outside central Auckland where it is less accessible to most viewers. This essay is an attempt to survey his output from its art school beginnings to his mature work of the present day. There has been little critical attention paid to the corpus so that the present text has been generated largely in a near absence of response from the art historians and critics who have been active over the course of his career. It is hoped that it will introduce his work to a new audience and establish a context for a deeper consideration of its range and importance.

Geoff Tune began his professional studies as an artist at the Elam School of Fine Arts in the late 1960s. His first Auckland paintings are views of Mt Eden, an inner suburb of Auckland where he was living while a student. They mark a transition from Gisborne imagery that had been his focus earlier on. At that time landscape and representational painting were still very much in vogue – even Colin McCahon, his teacher at Elam, often used landscape motifs as an essential part of his artistic language. Other artists on the Auckland scene, like Don Binney, much younger than McCahon and emerging at the time with shows at dealer galleries, also used landscape forms in their paintings drawn from Auckland and its environs. Tune's simplified and patterned presentation of landforms and colonial houses against areas of sky and clouds looks closer to Binney at this stage than McCahon. Stylized but recognizable landscape painting had been current in New Zealand painting for a long time – notably with Rita Angus, still a force at this time with her views of Wellington in a kind of Cubist presentation. It was more with this tradition than popular landscape painters like Peter McIntyre that Tune found his starting point. It seemed a reasonable and acceptable direction to take at a time when critics still thought that local subject-matter contributed authenticity to New Zealand painting and were sceptical of abstraction.

At first he drew specific buildings and trees but gradually he began to make invented views, with Mt Eden appearing as a symbolic enduring presence. At the same time Peter Siddell began his career that was to remain focused on the volcanic cones and the colonial houses clustered around their slopes. Tune and Siddell both eliminated the temporary signs of modern life, people, power lines, cars and transport from their views. Already Tune was looking past everyday appearances to more enduring forces in nature. All his early paintings have hard edges, though not the outlines of Binney, and already show an interest in shape, colour and form, essential ingredients of the abstract works to follow. His landscapes remain inside the conventions invented by McCahon, Woollaston and Rita Angus. For example, *Poverty Bay Landscape*, 1969, follows McCahon closely in stripping away the incidentals of the scene and presenting bare, green, volcanic hills and rolling countryside cleared for pasture, except for a few shelter trees near the farmhouse. It is a scene not chosen for scenic beauty but for its raw ordinariness. It recalls McCahon's reductive North Otago landscapes of a few years earlier. The emphatic greenness and lack of impressionistic light effects mark a departure from popular landscapes of the period. This kind of landscape replaces the earlier types and gives a more recognizable, iconic dimension to the New Zealand scene. It evokes the starkness, the isolation and the melancholy of rural life – the absence of doors and windows contributes to a sense of being alone.

The *Lion Rock* series, begun in Tune's Honours year at Elam, moves his Auckland subject matter from the inner city to the West Coast beaches – an area already popular with contemporary painters, notably Binney and McCahon both of whom did important work there. The West Coast

was to become an enduring source of inspiration for the artist throughout his career. Tune traces the origin of this subject matter to his interest in surfing. The paintings focus on sea, sky and land showing no people or activities, least of all surfing. Instead there is the solitary experience of pitting one's strength against the elements. There is a continued reductive nature in the imagery which pares down clouds, waves and the silhouette of Lion Rock to crisp shapes and patterns. He was interested in the triangulation of Lion Rock – following on from the trinity of houses used in the late Mt Eden works. The echoes of Don Binney's West Coast scenes is apparent in the silhouetting of the coastal profiles against a bright clear sky and the use of pronounced local colour – blue sky, dark green sea, grey sand and rocks. Also, the paintings feature an identifiable landmark that the viewer knows, specifically Lion Rock at Piha. The first and second series of these paintings are in line with with the hard-edge realism of the early 1970s, not only of Binney but also Robin White and Ian Scott. In his early figurative phase of the late 1960s and early 1970s Scott introduced West Coast landscape elements into his paintings. But Tune was also looking at the abstract work of Hotere, Walters and Mrkusich at the time where structure and geometry had a major role to play. These abstract painters led the move away from landscape painting towards an art of geometric abstraction that owes little to representation or regional landscape. However, as Ed Hanfling has noted, the concerns of painters like Thornley, Scott and Roy Good had some local nuances that created a kind of West Coast abstraction.

The shaped supports that Tune introduced to the second series of Piha paintings recall the shaped canvases of non-figurative painters of the period, especially American artists like Stella and Noland where the object-hood of the painting was emphasized at the expense of illusion. Tune's contemporary Roy Good made shaped works in the early 1970s as did other artists in the Mrkusich/ Vuletic circle, like Alan Wright and Geoff Thornley. Tune has spoken of his desire to eliminate the 'fill in' parts of the landscape in the rectangular format and to focus on points of interest. This focusing reflects how we look at and scan the landscape – one-point perspective does not truly reflect the seeing process. The triangular forms made by the shaped supports help set up a dialogue with the landscape motifs they contain. This mix of abstract and landscape forms was to become a constant in Tune's mature painting. He has observed that he is 'a frustrated non-figurative painter' more interested in abstraction than realism in its various guises. He also did a series called *Gulf* in 1972 – clouds, cloud shadows on the sea or islands as if viewed from a plane. In these the forms become more abstract and point the way towards his later works. At this period he recalls looking at Mrkusich's *Elements* series, tracing to them the beginnings of his interest in colour which was also developed by his study of the intense blues in Renaissance paintings of the sky and heavens. He feels it is misleading to consider only contemporary influences on his work when, apart from Renaissance painting, he was also intrigued by Mannerist art with the contrast between a 'hard, tight finish' and emotionally disturbed or strange content.

This dilemma of where to position one's painting was to confront a number of his contemporaries including Ian Scott and Richard Killeen, both of whom made non-representational work after realist beginnings and have since returned to figuration. A popular painter of the same generation, Dick Frizzell, feels able to move freely from one idiom to another. Earlier on this was not such a problem, but it became so at this period – even mature painters like Bill Sutton and Rudi Gopas, for example, vacillated between realism and abstraction. The early 1970s was a highpoint for abstraction in Auckland but was also a time when battle lines were drawn between advocates of regionalism and realism and supporters of abstraction and non-figuration. There was a critical divide between Petar Vuletic an advocate of abstraction and Hamish Keith who supported figurative painting. For painters there was a pull in both directions and some accommodation between the polarities. Geoff Tune was to position himself ultimately somewhere in between.

The last of the *Lion Rock* paintings, series 3 of 1973, marked a change away from the hard-edge forms to a more spontaneous approach and a shift from panel to canvas as support. The rock form itself becomes more symbolic and is defined more loosely, though recognizably, and the sky and sea take on the gestural character found in the West coast watercolours McCahon made in the early 1970s at Muriwai. Tune sees this as his acknowledgment of McCahon his teacher. From this

time on the works become increasingly abstract and formal in the *Towards Eden* series. He painted several transitional landscapes that link the *Lion Rock* series with the subsequent *Mt Eden* series.

With the *Towards Eden* series, begun in 1977, Tune eliminated representational drawing for the first time. He admits to not having any aptitude for drawing and to rarely having done any as such. Yet, he has always retained a feeling for the places in which he lives and they help give his imagery its identity. He has noted: 'The works were based on the view of Mt Eden from our front window – dark mountain, red roof, blue sky, yellow curtains and white window frames.' But the association is not obvious anymore than was the case with Ian Scott in his *Lattice* series where there was a reference to suburban trellis fencing. Tune constructs his images as abstract paintings in which the elements of colour, shape and composition are arranged according to formalist criteria rather than representational concerns. For example, he divides the canvas with vertical lines and arranges a central yellow strip that owes more to Maori tribal art conventions than to the yellow curtain of his front window. Tukutuku panels with the central yellow vertical band were apparently found only in the Gisborne/East Coast area. Tune had seen these panels on marae and the concept had made an impression. The large areas of flat black paint relate to an emphasis in New Zealand abstraction of older artists like McCahon and Hotere more than to the colour of Mt Eden. Illusions of depth are largely absent from what is essentially an arrangement of shapes, tones and colours on a flat surface. This Mt Eden has the presence of some dark spiritual force, ancient and enduring – far different from the familiar slopes of everyday experience bedecked with little wooden houses. Tune recalls being aware of Mantegna's San Zeno altarpiece when creating these works, thinking of the disposition of blue, yellow and red in abstract terms. For example, in *Towards Eden, Windows*, 1977 the blue of the 'sky' is not confined to the upper half of the canvas.

At the time he was painting the first *Towards Eden* series Tune exhibited at the short-lived Gallery Data run by Lewis Mrkusich and specializing in minimalist abstraction. At this stage his direction comes quite close to a number of his near contemporaries who showed there, among them Stephen Bambury and Roy Good. His reductive imagery intensified and became more geometric and austere in works like *Towards Eden*, 1982, where the vertical canvas is bisected by a vertical yellow bar and contains a smaller version of itself outlined in white with black rectangles at the base. Here Tune moves as far as he will go towards a non-representational art. There are some works in the series that approximate Hotere in their austerity and sombre palette. For Tune, as for his contemporaries, these years 1977-85 mark a high point for non-figurative painting. But few were able to continue with it. For him a starting point in nature was important, as it was usually for McCahon. It was not easy to abandon all reference to nature and personal experience and create a new universe out of abstract forms. Besides it was hard to have an individual identity if the elements in your works were the same as those of your peers. Walters had solved the problem in his best works by using ethnic motifs from Maori rock art and classic kowhaiwhai painting, transformed into geometric forms but still able to be recognized. And Tune was to search for age-old enduring imagery for his own works as he matured as a painter. It is noteworthy that these images of 1981-2 are all hard edge and any gestural strokes occur in the fields of colour that are for the most part monotonal. By using a vertical format he reduces landscape allusions.

From here Tune moved to a completely non-figurative approach with his *Thoughts on Malevich* series of 1984. He was not alone among Auckland painters in referencing the Russian minimalist – Roy Good had paid tribute to him with his *Tower for Kasimir* painting of 1975 and Stephen Bambury had also drawn inspiration from his work. The geometric motifs of squares on a white ground, especially the black squares and primary colours of blue, yellow and red take Tune into a world that for the first time almost excludes his local environment and the landscape. He felt the need to move between non-figurative abstraction and the abstraction from landscape 'at that time.' He was interested in the formalisation of elements and the stripping back of imagery to the essentials. The use of primary colours is found in a number of artists in the Vuletic circle including Alan Wright and Milan Mrkusich. Both Wright and Mrkusich had used squares of primary colour in their compositions in the 1970s which Tune could have seen, though he was not part of the Vuletic circle.

Predictably Tune did not stay in this rarefied territory for long. He soon felt the need to move back to landscape. For example, his Matarangi landscapes of 1987 are made up of geometric shapes like the square and triangle but have loose gestural brushwork suggestive of vegetation, water and clouds. These works are not representational but instead evoke the landscape and use geometric forms to order and control the components. His local allusions do not close out more universal concerns but provide a way to commenting on them. After having disappeared from his work for about ten years the West Coast landscape reappeared in his Muriwai paintings of 1990. Now the imagery was made up of works in which square and triangular canvases were bolted together to express the inter-relationship of the 'dynamic elements' in the landscape.

The Owhata works of 1989/90 reference a location at Rotorua but use geometrical motifs to deal with cross-cultural issues without making some kind of Maori art. His geometric motifs are placed over and in a loosely brushed background. The vertical format of the panels echoes the carved figures in a meeting house while the imagery deals with basic archetypes. His first use of male/female imagery occurred in the Owhata works. He had stayed on the Owhata marae, home of the famous story of Hinemoa and Tutanekei which may have influenced him in this development. The paintings are expressive and lively with an emphasis on colour. The *Diakosmos* series of 1992 is of shaped works using square, circle and triangle with red, black and white used symbolically. He cut out the shapes which also deal with male and female elements – the earth is represented by the square and the circle symbolizes continuity and eternity. He was thinking about Sengai's famous ink sketch *Universe* which uses the square, circle and triangle as symbols of higher truth behind visible reality. This work was admired at the time by a number of leading American abstract painters for its economy and openness to a range of meanings. Tune was also thinking of archaeological theories of people like Maria Gimbutas on the theory of the feminisation of the earth. He returned to the imagery of Mt Eden in works of the mid-nineties widening the cross/cultural meanings.

In 1998 he began the important *Tracing the Seasons* series which is concerned with time and generations. He had visited Neolithic sites in Britain in 1995 exploring connections between past and present and thinking about the continuity of time. In these works the circle references huge monuments like Stonehenge as well as retaining its customary range of meanings. The square refers to the earth and the black colouration to the void from which order has been created. At this time, inspired by the people he saw making brass rubbings at Wells cathedral, he began to draw abstract layers of lines onto the imagery as a personal mark to individuate his work. These drawn elements are new and become an important part of subsequent paintings. They allow an improvised and intuitive aspect to enter the works as well as to suggest the formation of life and the process of creation. They can be compared with the loose brushwork of the *Diakosmos* works but have a more personal identity as having been made by the movements of the hand in a more precise and defined way. He also sees the lines as subverting the formal structure by their inherent informality.

About this time he also introduces a circular, lens-like element in the centre of the paintings that looks out into space at the constellations and stars. He had been using a telescope to look at the heavens and to expand his means of looking at his environment to include the larger context of the earth as a planet spinning through space along with millions of other galaxies full of stars and planets. This larger cosmological view may have been encouraged by his reading about Neolithic monuments and rituals associated with them in which the sun, stars and planets as well as the seasons played a part. While his constellations of stars shown in the paintings can be identified and, like Orion, are seen from the South Pacific they are not intended to be scientific in type but more extensions of the landscape view to include the night sky as well as the more typical earthbound focus. It is an enlargement of the conventional landscape to include the macro – the universe – and the micro, the immediate landscape and piece of earth from which the viewer experiences the totality of the natural world. The presence of a viewer or indeed of life is implied not stated. There are no signs of man or his built environment. Tune is concerned with the larger view. The paintings in the series *Observed from Opito* 2003 continue with similar concerns and reflect Tune's interest in

Professor John North's astronomical archeology. The *Equinox* paintings can be loosely fitted in here, as well.

In 2005 Geoff Tune painted a series of works called *Pilgrimage*. These paintings are connected thematically to the idea of a journey in both time and space through Britain and Europe in search of particular places and associations. As a colonial with British lineage, Tune was drawn to the sites and cultural artefact's of cities, monuments and places with a longer, richer history than that available to him in New Zealand. In the titles of the *Pilgrimage* series he has identified a number of cities and sites in France, Italy and Britain with which he engaged on various levels. They include Avignon, Roussillon, Florence, Lugano, Amalfi, and Castlerigg. The paintings take the form of meditations or responses to the places visited, not depictions of them in a literal sense. A parallel in music might be with Liszt's *Years of the Pilgrimage* pieces for the piano. The paintings retain the formal vocabulary Tune had developed in his previous works and are essentially abstract. We do not find images of landmarks or monuments though there are allusions to artworks like Michelangelo's sculptures in the Medici Chapel, Florence, and the bronze statue of St Andrew and the cathedral facade at Amalfi.

Tune has found a way to reference the places he visited by retaining his scribbling technique of drawing and the geometric motifs of square, triangle and circle – all constants in his work. For example, in the Amalfi paintings there is a prevalent blue colouration. The blue is drawn in over the dark, almost black under-paint, and gradated from a deep blue through to a pale, almost white tint to suggest atmosphere and depth. His colouration is true to the place, the Mediterranean climate and true to his conception of the town and its history. The St Andrew's Cross symbol in the paintings evokes the saint whose remains were believed to reside in the cathedral and who was crucified. Tune introduces red to the lower arms of the cross to represent the blood and sacrifice of the saint's life for his beliefs. The golden arch above the cross relates to the semi-circle above the entrance of the cathedral and draws attention to the cultural richness of the town. Thus, while keeping to his own visual vocabulary Tune was able to adapt it to a new situation and give it new meanings. By introducing the word *Celeste* – meaning sky blue – he adds a further signifier of place and climate to his imagery. *Celeste* also embraces the idea of peace, appropriate to the present tourist image of the town.

In the case of the two Roussillon works the introduction of red tints recalls the hills of pure red ochre that have provided a livelihood for residents of the town and pigments for artists. The same geometric elements of the semi-circle, triangle and square recur again. The multi-layered meanings of such symbols add to the total impact of the imagery which requires time to reflect on and reveal its various dimensions. The symbols appear again in the Avignon paintings where they are related to the Palace of the Popes and remnants of frescoes there, especially those of Simone Martini. Tune uses his layered mark-making to call to mind the creative and cultural dimensions of the town. While there is no specific reference to the Provencal landscape there is a feeling of strong light, blue skies and warmth that radiates from the paintings. The semi-circle here acts to enclose the sky while the circular forms suggest timelessness, and the never-ending cycles of life – birth/death, night/day, the seasons.

Pilgrimage Florence – Thinking of Michelangelo makes allusions to the Medici Chapel, San Lorenzo, taking on an almost architectural dimension while using the same symbolic language of geometric forms. The central circle can be read like a ground plan of the chapel while the disposition of the four triangular motifs call to mind the carved figures by Michelangelo depicting *Night*, *Day*, *Dawn* and *Dusk*. The rectangular divisions seemingly allude to the tombs of the Dukes. Michelangelo's Neo-Platonic philosophy as revealed in the Chapel fits comfortably with Tune's long-time interest in the cyclical and the relation between space, time and matter. The meaning and purpose of life must be included in the equation. His sombre grey palette in this work is in harmony with the Carrara marble and pietra serena stone of which the chapel and its sculpture are composed.

The British works like *Pilgrimage, Castlerigg* have continuities with paintings influenced by his earlier visits to Neolithic sites, enhanced by subsequent reading and reflection. In this work, unusually a specific landscape appears in the upper zone with a concentric spiral below. But the

consistent imagery of the square and circle continue as well. He notes that 'the relationship of the landscape to the monument at Castlerigg is very close – the circle is enclosed by the circle of the hills and the spiral carved into the main stone. His introduction of the drawn, scribbling component reinforces the idea of the process of forming life and shaping culture slowly from the basic elements of creation. A red triangle helps to relieve the sombre tones of this work and has the meaning of life and sacrifice. Tune's intention with the drawn component is a partly to make his own contribution - to include his mark among the rest. In addition to the *Pilgrimage* series in his *Sacred Places* works of 2008 he has drawn on his photographs of European churches and cathedrals looking for similarities 'between these buildings and their function and those ancient ritual sites where somewhat similar activities took place, with in many cases ancient sites underlying the current building.'

Alongside the *Pilgrimage* series Tune took up ideas present in his *Tracing the Seasons* works. In the paintings called *Looking West* of 2004 there is a retrospective aspect in that he picks up on various motifs that go back as far as the Piha paintings of 1975. Lion Rock appears in the geometric shape of a triangle in the lower left of these works, along with irregular strokes of white or grey on a dark surface that suggest waves. The squared circle is placed at the centre of the imagery, referencing unity, continuity etc. It is the prehistoric earth that emerges as important to the artist, that which endures, not that which is transient. He was spending time at Piha again because members of his family were living there. He depicts a view of the heavens with stars in the upper zone, earth at the centre and sea at the lower levels. Tune explains that sunsets at the beach account for the warm colouration in the scribbled areas. The scribbled areas here are more varied in extent and colour than previously – in some the powerful red colouring of almost cosmic intensity is suggestive of the forces at work in the birth of stars and planets. In the night sky areas the artist indicates the stars visible above Piha establishing an additional layer of association with place to that of landmarks like Lion Rock.

His subsequent Gisborne landscapes also are based on the sea shore and incorporate similar ideas. *Steps Along the Way, Wainui*, 2006, is an ambitious large work in fourteen sections. All the panels in the painting are of the same size and are designed to be seen in sequence along a wall or around a room. As is usually the case with Tune, we are given a specific location, in this instance Wainui Beach near Gisborne where the artist grew up. This helps reinforce the biographical dimension of the work through the personal significance of the setting to the artist. The steps along the way can be seen at one level as his life's journey. He was nearing sixty at the time and was entering a late stage of his career – a time to take stock and reflect. Because of its sheer physical size this work requires time to walk past and to think about the imagery and its meanings. Again the passage of time is central to the conception. Tune has literally drawn his imagery out of a dark ground, in analogy with the creation of stars and planets out of clouds of gas in outer space. Throughout the work he has deployed his favourite geometrical symbols, especially the triangle and the square. The drawn component is laid over the dark void of the background in successive layers, in a blue/white range starting darker underneath and gradually lightening in the uppermost layers. The separation of light from dark is important, as is the sense of becoming, of evolution.

Along the base of each panel is a ripple of white, sometimes a single stroke, other times layers of strokes hatched to suggest waves and movement. By these means he calls to mind the beach without actually depicting it literally. The fourteen panels of *Steps Along the Way, Wainui*, refer to the Stations of the Cross, a ritual performed by Roman Catholics who follow a route around a church or pathway in its grounds in imitation of Christ's Passion, stopping at each station which is marked by an image, to pray and reflect on Christ's sacrifice. The ritual can be described as a personal pilgrimage of prayer and meditation. Tune's work is not necessarily to be seen as Christian but it does lend itself to reflection on the journey of life each of us make to the same inevitable end. Because the imagery is abstract and landscape based we do not need to identify the panels with events in the Passion. The parallel, though, is deliberate and underlines the seriousness of the work.

Tune was undoubtedly thinking of McCahon's *Beach Walk* painting of 1973 (Te Papa) when he conceived this work. The McCahon has eleven canvases, not fourteen, because several

stations are treated together and not given a separate support. McCahon's work has specific symbolism dealing with the final passage of his friend the poet James K. Baxter's soul up the beach at Muriwai on its way to the spirit world. His panels are recognizable landscapes of Muriwai with sky, sea and shore zones easily made out. The canvases differ in size and in mood – some are dark and stormy, others bright and sparkling. While deeply symbolic, they are more literal than Tune's paintings and have a clearer narrative quality. By contrast Tune's imagery encompasses the macro view of space and the heavens as well as the micro world of foreshore and sea. It also is conceived in a more abstract style. The dark blue and black colouration contributes a solemnity and cosmic dimension not so easily discernible in McCahon's work. Energetic drawn lines suggest movement, light and superhuman forces at work. In the final panel a red disc, the sun, appears to be about to fall below the dark horizon of the sea. We feel an encroaching darkness. McCahon retains a Christian symbolism and belief in salvation that Tune dispenses with. He was influenced by the writings of Chris Tilley especially *The Phenomenology of Landscape*, the study of landscape subjectively in terms of its meanings to people in the past. In particular Tilley's description of walking the Dorset Cursus was in his mind when creating the journey we follow in his paintings. This contributes to its innovative nature and special layers of meaning. Tune notes 'the edge or liminal area between land and water has long been significant in rituals relating to life and death/sacrifices/depositions etc.'

In 2006 Tune returned to another subject taken from the Gisborne area that had last appeared in his work in the mid-1960s – Young Nick's Head. This famous landmark, associated with Captain Cook's discovery of New Zealand in 1769, had been extensively depicted by local landscape artists in a conventional way and needed a fresh approach. Tune's new series called *Sightings* developed thematically out of his *Tracing the Seasons* paintings and was prompted by the opportunity to exhibit at Gisborne. The subject was significant for him and had layers of associations and memories attached to it. Although the works are abstracted, and retain geometrical features, especially the triangle, they do read as landscapes with cliffs seen in profile behind foreground ocean. They have overtones of the coastal profiles made by the early navigators from shipboard which is appropriate to this subject. He has described the procedure involved in making them as follows: 'The works are done from memory and are formed from key features that become generalizations, that remain in and are given context and significance in the mind with the passage of time.'

By depicting the landforms in black and white, Tune gives a somewhat ephemeral quality to the imagery suggesting the appearance of the cliffs rising as if out of a mist when seen from sea. He also calls our attention to the precarious nature of the cliffs subject to erosion from wind and tide. The grey tones of the cliffs are evoked cleverly by the artist's trademark overlays of drawn lines that seem light and porous rather than solid and enduring. His viewpoint is at eye level from Waikanae Beach so that the cliff forms rise up from the dark water at their base. The blackness of the ground he describes as 'the darkness from which memories emerge.' By alternating light and dark cliff faces he generates a shallow spatial effect that is illusory and mysterious. Young Nick's Head appears and disappears speaking to us in a whisper of the myths and misconceptions that surround it. *Sightings* transforms the familiar subject into a new and individual experience for the viewer.

Closely related to the *Sightings* paintings are works in the *Tracing the Seasons* series based on memories of the Waioeka Gorge landscape between Gisborne and Opotiki – an area well known to the artist. One work, a diptych of 2008, juxtaposes a Waioeka image at the left with one of Young Nick's Head at the right effectively linking the two. The Waioeka Gorge paintings trace a journey through space and time and record the golden colours of autumn. The forms used are triangular as in the *Sightings* works and like them can be easily read as slopes of cliffs and hills. On the whole Tune uses representational forms rather more than in the earlier paintings of the series, which is ongoing. In the diptych Tune contrasts the gold and ochre hues of the Waioeka work with the grey and black palette of Young Nick's Head, though he does draw the gold across the sky area of the latter to link the two. Both parts of the diptych have the central circular imagery that is found in almost all of the series. The circles are divided into quadrants to symbolize the four seasons and

to combine the idea of a journey through the landscape with the cyclical passage of the seasons and the continuity of time embodied in the circle, an image of eternity. The stylized squiggles of white and grey paint at the bottom of the work represents water and with the earth and sky has elemental significance.

In his most recent series *Autumn in Eden*, 2010, there are stylistic features in common with the Waioeka paintings, especially in the rich colouration. The specific place, Mt Eden has been a continuing theme throughout Tune's painting from his earliest works to the present. He has noted, 'I focus on places which have special relevance in my life and which provide imagery and references that enable the use of particular landscape to explore the interconnections and interaction of its various elements.' Now the mountain is seen in depth as a geological structure, as a source of knowledge, and a site of past and present human interaction with the landscape. For example, the pits and fortifications of the Maori are in evidence in the markings on the mountain. He has reflected on the European name also with its 'connections to age old myths that also involve knowledge as well as concepts of early paradise and life and death.' He has retained his geometrical symbols but added the shape of the Tau and Latin crosses to some of the pieces reverting to the shaped works of his earlier career. These bring in Christian concepts as well as pagan ones, suggestive of types of belief and ritual. He has built the works up from the dark background that he favours as a starting point for developing the image from the scribbled lines and marks that suggest a state of flux and an interaction between diverse 'perceptions, ideas and understandings.' These powerful and richly meaningful works mark a culmination of over forty years of serious painting. They have come a long way from his earliest superficial views of Mt Eden to a more personal and in-depth reflection on the place, its history and cultural significance.

Michael Dunn