

Des Helmore

lives and works in Hawkes Bay

Diploma of Fine Arts (Hons)
University of Canterbury
School of Fine Arts, 1963

“Des Helmore’s unique view of the world has been fine-tuned by a previous life as an entomological illustrator. Away from the microscope he has adjusted his scale and focused an observant eye on the overlooked corners of the urban landscape, celebrating the odd and unexpected. His spare and economical compositions suggest frames from a comic strip, and that the mystery of what’s really going on might be revealed in the next one – if only it existed. Helmore reduces elements to their bare essentials and creates a strange unease, while there’s also the suggestion of a sly humour at work. He does offer the occasional clue, such as a section of signage, although never enough to explain the situation. And while he favours dark outlines, somewhat in the style of Hergés Tintin, the muted areas in between aren’t as flat as they appear, but enlivened by his own brand of pointillism. The cumulative effect is a feeling that something’s about to happen - and it could be just round the corner”.

-Richard Wolfe. 2005

Des Helmore was born in 1940 in Takapau, Hawkes Bay. He attended University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts in 1959, graduating in 1963 with a Diploma of Fine Arts (Hons). While there he won the 1960 Louise Lonsdale Prize for Junior Life Drawing, the Laura M. Hart Memorial Trophy in Landscape Painting, and the 1961 Rosa Sawtell Prize for Figure Painting.

In 1965 he received a Merit Award in the Manawatu Contemporary Art Competition, Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North and held his first solo exhibition of paintings at the Hawkes Bay Art Gallery and Museum, Napier, followed in 1966 by a solo exhibition at the Manawatu Art Gallery.



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From 1967-69 he worked as a geographical illustrator at University College London and exhibited at B. H. Corner Gallery in 1968. He returned to Christchurch in 1970 where he worked as an entomological illustrator at Canterbury Museum, then as a graphic artist for NZBC Television and Television One News, Christchurch. He exhibited in Thirty Plus at the Robert McDougall Art Gallery in 1971 and Land 1976 at the Canterbury Society of Arts, and was a finalist in the 1972 Benson and Hedges Art Award, Canterbury Society of Arts.

Moving to Auckland in 1975 he worked as entomological illustrator for DSIR and Landcare Research until 2006. In 1982 he contributed, "Drawings of New Zealand Insects" to Bulletin Number 8 of the Entomological Society of New Zealand. Described as "A collection of 22 drawings of New Zealand insects by Des Helmore, one of New Zealand's most talented biological artists." Helmore's drawings have illustrated many scientific papers and publications over the years. Sir Charles Fleming FRS wrote, "Des Helmore's drawings supply the need for pictures of entire insects felt by many New Zealand amateurs and inter-disciplinary students, to an artistic standard few can hope to emulate"

Since a 1990 solo show at Lopdell House, Auckland and exhibiting in Perceptions of Place at the Hawkes Bay Museum, Napier in 1991, he has exhibited in solo and group shows at Claybrook Gallery, Auckland from 1991- 95, Anna Bibby Gallery from 1995-2010, and Jane Sanders Art from 2010 until 2012, when she closed.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2011 Des Helmore, 'Being there. Where?' New Paintings.



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Jane Sanders Gallery, Auckland

2008 'Cold Front', Anna Bibby Gallery, Auckland

2006 'Des Helmore, Recent Paintings', Anna Bibby Gallery,
Auckland

2005 'Random Encounters', Des Helmore. Anna Bibby
Gallery, Auckland

2002 With Stanley Palmer and Johanna Pegler, Anna Bibby
Gallery, Auckland

1994 With Gerda Leenards, Claybrook Gallery, Auckland

1991 With Yvonne Coleman, Claybrook Gallery, Auckland

1990 'Desmond Helmore', Landscapes, Lopdell House,
Titirangi

1975 'Desmond Helmore', Paintings. CSA Gallery,
Christchurch

1968 'Desmond Helmore', Paintings. B. H. Corner Gallery,
London

1966 'Desmond Helmore', Paintings. Manawatu Art Gallery

1964 'Desmond Helmore', Paintings, Hawkes Bay Art Gallery
and Museum, Napier

SELECTED GROUP & CURATED EXHIBITIONS

2017 'Encroachment', Space Gallery, Hawkes Bay

2017 'Extreme Suction', nkb Gallery, Auckland

2012 Group Show (Last exhibition, Jane Sanders Art)

2011 Des Helmore, 'Being there. Where? New Paintings'.



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Jane Sanders

- 2010 Selection 010 - 011, Group show, Jane Sanders Art
- 2010 Painting 'Solar Receptor, Cass' sold to Christchurch Art Gallery, by Jane Sanders Art
- 2010 Group Show, Jane Sanders Gallery
- 2010 'Metroland', Group show, Anna Bibby Gallery
- 2010 'Poster Boy', John Lyall exhibition, Jane Sanders Gallery. Painting included
- 2010 Creative Hawkes Bay Invitational 2010, Group show, Hastings City Art Gallery
- 2009 Group Show, Anna Bibby Gallery, Auckland
- 2009 'Landscape to Garden', Group show, Anna Bibby Gallery
- 2009 Group Show, Anna Bibby Gallery, Auckland
- 2008 Des Helmore, 'Cold Front', Anna Bibby Gallery, Auckland
- 2007 Group Show, Anna Bibby Gallery, Auckland
- 2007 New Year, Group show, Anna Bibby Gallery, Auckland
- 2006 'Bugged', Lopdell House, Titirangi, Auckland. (Insect drawings done at DSIR/Landcare Research)
- 2006 Des Helmore, 'Recent Paintings', Anna Bibby Gallery, Auckland
- 2006 Des Helmore, Gavin Hurley, Sam Mitchell, Martin Poppelwell, Martin Thompson, Emily Wolfe, Anna Bibby Gallery, Auckland
- 2005 'Random Encounters', Des Helmore. Anna Bibby Gallery, Auckland



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2004/05 Secret Garden Exhibition, Puke Ariki, New Plymouth, 4 insect drawings exhibited.

2004 'Land/Landscape', Group show, North Art Community Arts Centre, Auckland

2004 'Landscapes', Group show, Anna Bibby Gallery, Auckland

2002 Des Helmore, Stanley Palmer, Johanna Pegler, Anna Bibby Gallery

2001 'Landscape', Group show, Anna Bibby Gallery, Auckland

1995 'Late 20th Century Landscapes', Group show, exhibition, Claybrook Gallery, Auckland

1994 Des Helmore, Gerda Leenards, Paintings. Claybrook Gallery, Auckland

1993 Small Works, Christmas Exhibition, Group show, Claybrook Gallery

1992 New and Recent Work, Group show, Claybrook Gallery, Auckland

1991 Yvonne Coleman, Desmond Helmore, Paintings. Claybrook Gallery, Auckland,

1991 'Perceptions of Place', Group show, Hawkes Bay Art Gallery and Museum, Napier

1990 Desmond Helmore, Landscapes, Lopdell House, Titirangi

1976 'Land 1976', Group show, Canterbury Society of Arts Festival Exhibition, Christchurch

1975 'Desmond Helmore', Paintings. CSA Gallery, Christchurch

1972 'Benson and Hedges Art Award', 1972, CSA Gallery, Christchurch



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1971 '30 Plus', Group show, Robert McDougall Art Gallery,
Christchurch

1970 'Annual Exhibition;', Group show, Canterbury Society
of Arts

1969 Occasional paintings in Hyams? Gallery, St. John's
Wood, London

1968 'Desmond Helmore', Paintings. B. H. Corner Gallery,
London

1966 'Desmond Helmore', Paintings. Manawatu Art Gallery

1966 'Manawatu Prize for Contemporary Art 1966', Group
show, Manawatu Art Gallery

1965 'Manawatu Prize for Contemporary Art 1965', Group
show, Manawatu Art Gallery. Merit Award

1964 'Desmond Helmore', Paintings, Hawkes Bay Art Gallery
and Museum, Napier

1962 Occasional paintings in Several Arts Gallery,
Christchurch

1962 Annual Exhibition, Group show, Canterbury Society of
Arts, Christchurch

1961 Annual Exhibition, Group show, Canterbury Society of
Arts, Christchurch

1961 Mona Edgar Collection, painting in collection, Hocken
Library, University of Otago

1960 Annual Exhibition, Group show, Canterbury Society of
Arts, Christchurch

WORK IN PUBLIC COLLECTIONS: (NZ)

Christchurch Art Gallery



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Canterbury Public Library

Canterbury Society of Arts

Hocken Library, University of Otago

Hawkes Bay Art Gallery and Museum, Napier

University of Canterbury

The Wallace Arts Trust Collection

PUBLICATIONS

Helmore, D. W. 1982. Drawings of New Zealand Insects. Bulletin of the Entomological Society of New Zealand 8, 52p.

Des Helmore, Catalogue, Random Encounters, Anna Bibby Gallery, 2005. Richard Wolfe, Dick Frizzell, Anna Bibby. Extract from Richard Wolfe: (as reproduced above)

REVIEWS

Finalist, Benson and Hedges Art Award, 1972, CSA Gallery, Christchurch, 7 - 28 Jun, 1972

Judge: Elwyn Lynn (Australia). Judge's comment:

Curve: .."an excellent example of uncompromising geometrical severity and dynamic movement taking great risks in the downward sweep of the black "rainbow," a demanding work, the pink flush adding to the grimness..."

Desmond Helmore, Paintings

CSA Gallery, Christchurch, 16 Sep, 1975

John Oakley, Christchurch Star, 5 Sep, 1975:

"..Helmore's early excursions into the field of abstract painting have paid off and he gives a new dimension to his work now that he has returned to the field of reality.

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His vision is a personal one, and in analysing a subject he distills and presents its essence with confident assurance. While some are fairly loosely painted, others are more precise, and these are the more interesting. One finds exquisitely painted passages - like the sweep of a bay, a luminous horizon, or a sky of infinite space - that gives a timeless quality to his art. ...The figures he incorporates in some of his paintings and the mask like head studies are similarly abstracted, yet they have a presence which is hauntingly expressive..”

Desmond Helmore, Landscapes

Waitakere Arts and Cultural Centre/Lopdell House, 6 Sep - 4 Oct, 1990

Richard Dale, New Zealand Herald, 13 Sep, 1990:

“..Paintings of the rural environment, working fields and disused paddocks all have a late autumnal feeling to them. It is a hot season in Helmore’s farming country with few people to be seen.

The paintings are a mix of documentation: of the idiosyncratic (the farmhouse completely surrounded by a hedge on all four sides), the iconic (the solitary caravan), the schematic (the appearance of dotted lines, grids and symbols), and the photographic (black and white contrasts that a photographer might gravitate towards). Ruth Cole (the orange base), Michael Shepherd (in limited tonal areas of sky and ground), and Michael Stevenson seem the context of these paintings - a certain nostalgia, a quality of the naive, and the expressive, a newer context for the artist who has a background in abstract painting..”

Yvonne Coleman, Des Helmore,

Claybrook Gallery, 25 Sep - 12 Oct, 1991

‘From T. J. McNamara, Perspectives on Art, New Zealand Herald, 4 Oct? 1991:

“..There are two exhibitions at the Claybrook Gallery in Claybrook Rd, Parnell. One by Yvonne Coleman has images in a messy, false, naive style. But the other, by Des Helmore, is a real find. He uses the unexpected - such as finding a drainpipe in a forest. His straight landscapes are competent but here and there he adds an

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extra spin with details that tighten the work - and give it a special astringency..”

Des Helmore, Gerda Leenards
Claybrook Gallery, 2 - 19 Mar, 1994

T. J. McNamara, New Zealand Herald, 10 Mar, 1994:|

“..Still in Parnell at the Claybrook Gallery is a fascinating double exhibition by Des Helmore and Gerda Leenards. Both are painting landscape, but in a very special way. Helmore takes the most banal and ordinary of scenes and makes of it something strange and moody. Some of the moodiness of effect comes from his way of letting the reddish-brown of his underpainting show around the edge of his forms. This, and a dim and strange light, make such things as fences and rails - even a peg-bag on a clothesline - enigmatic and odd. Strangest of all these works are Dung Covered Paddock and Near the Coast, but overall they are consistent in style and quality as they are in size and colour..”

Mobile Art Annual Exhibition, 25 Jul, 1999
City News, 15 Jul, 1995:

“..Wormwood (Sylvia Siddell) is just one of the standouts in this collection. It will sit beside such gems as Dung Covered Paddock by Desmond Helmore. This is an addictive picture, so New Zealandesque in its scope, so apathetic in its ultimate statement. His work seems to follow the tradition of the great Paul Stothers. Irreverent to a tee, caring too much not to be critical, blindly patriotic, employing tough love when it’s needed..”

Landscapes, Anna Bibby Gallery, 20 Apr - 15 May, 2004.
James Cousins, Dick Frizzell, Des Helmore, David Hofer, Kathryn McCool, Stanley Palmer, Elizabeth Thomson, Heather Straka

From T. J. McNamara, New Zealand Herald, 28 Apr, 2004:

“..Des Helmore, whose work should be seen more often, makes tight compositions of buildings, signs and parking spaces, dry, but, nevertheless, meditated into tense evocative images..”

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Random Encounters

Anna Bibby Gallery, 11 May - 4 Jun, 2005

From T. J. McNamara. The galleries: Stark and unsettling perspective, New Zealand Herald, 25 May, 2005

“..Des Helmore makes us look again at familiar scenes in works such as Looking Back.. Reputation has odd vagaries. Some artists attain it early. Des Helmore, whose exhibition Random Encounters is at the Anna Bibby Gallery until June 4, has waited a long time.

He was at art school as long ago as the 1960s but paintings have appeared only rarely and a few at a time, yet they have been notable for their quality. Why this reticence? Why this isolation? Perhaps because it has taken a long time. All sorts of movements and revelations in art have emerged before Helmore’s tough combination of precise abstract values and acute observation of the passing scene could strike a chord and be recognised as a valid synthesis in an art world devoted to extremes.

The paintings in this show not only combine severe abstraction with buildings, landscape, sea and sky, but achieve something entirely his own. His stark portrayals of buildings, landscape, walls, seats and signs, railings and landscape combine with a curious palette of muted colour to have a disconcerting effect that makes us look again at familiar places.

The signs are important. In one of his paintings, the trade name ‘Renaissance’ is blazoned across a building and, equally tellingly, the painting is called Looking Back.

One aspect of the work is that Helmore is looking back at the studies in perspective that preoccupied the early Renaissance. He is looking back at the bright, clear light and the careful placement of objects in the space created behind the surface of the painting without entirely losing surface effects. The surface, particularly in the skies, is often delicately painterly.

The New Zealand inspiration for his painting is exemplified in Deck, where the railing of a typical deck in a home overlooking the sea goes deep into space in perspective. Light strikes the top of the rail and creates dark shadows on the deck. A

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touch of strangeness is given by a discarded shoe on the planking and beyond the railing there is a long, low horizon. It is the shoe as well as the light that provides the oddity in this painting. Elsewhere it is supplied by tradenames that give a strong hint of irony as well as establish familiarity. The signs that support them have a special part to play in the composition alongside the railings and poles with no apparent purpose. When Helmore takes his eye off particular objects and simply makes his shapes jump and dance the effect is not so individual or powerful. The Quick Brown Fox Jumps Over the Lazy Rabbit is a jagged and lively piece of abstraction but loses impact from lack of particularisation. Despite the inclusion of such experimental work, this show of nearly two dozen paintings should do much to lift the public reputation of a mature artist hitherto admired mostly by other artists..”

Des Helmore, Gavin Hurley, Sam Mitchell, Martin Poppelwell, Martin Thompson, Emily Wolfe Group Show, Anna Bibby Gallery, 14 Feb - 11 Mar, 2006

From T. J. McNamara, New Zealand Herald, 22 Feb, 2006:

“..Painting in oils is not dead, but as an expressive medium for art it is coming under a lot of shot and shell. In the many group exhibitions in Auckland this week, few artists are using oil paint. A typical exhibition is at the Anna Bibby Gallery until March 11. Oil painting is not entirely neglected. One of the most telling images in the show is Emily Wolfe’s The Silent Treatment. Another strong oil is Des Helmore’s Bather which effectively brings a 19th century boy from a Seurat painting into the 21st century..”

Cold Front, Des Helmore

Anna Bibby Gallery, 12 Feb - 1 Mar, 2008

From T. J. McNamara, New Zealand Herald, 21 Feb, 2008:

“..A totally different world is created by Des Helmore At the Anna Bibby Gallery at its new location in Jervois Rd. His is the world of suburbia. Out of the angularity of buildings, road markings, posts and signs he creates compositions that also convey a sense of the strangeness inherent in these ordinary surroundings. A work like Vendor off to Australia catches a situation with a special sort of irony that gives his

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careful, low-key work a flavour like no other..”

Extracts from Bibby Group Show

11 Feb - 8 Mar, 2009

by John Hurrell, eyeCONTACT www.eyecontactsite.com:

“..The dozen artists in this group show present a sort of ‘After New Year’ celebration: a display of stock to kick- start 09’s season. While there are no real surprises it is a good chance to see Anna Bibby’s taste - (craft- oriented, domestic scale), if you are not familiar with her shows already - and to ponder what her artists do. Lots of them seem to like to make bird imagery. Apart from Des Helmore and Tim Thatcher, they all have avian subject-matter somewhere...

Probably the most striking (and heretically non-feathered) paintings in the show are by Desmond Helmore and Tim Thatcher, works that celebrate the viscosity of paint while containing its fluidity within tight spatial structures. Helmore is the more austere of the two, a remarkably honed sensibility of exquisite precision. Thatcher, much looser, has larger less illustrative works, and uses a deeper space, but is just as controlled in organisation, though not in style of application...”

Creative Hawke’s Bay Invitational 2010, Hastings City Art Gallery, 9 Apr - 27 Jun, 2010 Extract from criticism by Roy Dunningham in ‘Baybuzz’, a Hawkes Bay paper, 8 Apr, 2010:

“..It has taken a while, but Creative Hawke’s Bay has got the formula right for this year’s Invitationals exhibition. ..

Certainly, the resulting Invitationals show this year is one of the most consistent in quality that I can recall... Desmond Helmore uses flat planes and reduced perspective reminiscent of Japanese woodcuts to achieve a sense of space that belies the modest dimensions of the pictures. His beautifully weighted colours and slightly surreal content enhances the Zen-like calm of these finely resolved works... There are too many good things in this show to cover in this review. Go and see it for yourself.

Selector Tim Walker has given us an exhibition that truly looks at Hawke’s Bay in its many aspects. This is not the “colourful at all costs” Hawke’s Bay of tourist promotions but is darker and deeper. And a lot more interesting...”



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Poster Boy, John Lyall exhibition, Jane Sanders Gallery 9 Jun - 10 Jul, 2010

Extract from 'Poster Boy for Special Road Trips,' By Adam Gifford, NZ Herald, 22 Jun, 2010

Painting included: Solar Reception, Cass, Des Helmore:

"..In Cass, Lyall was videoed putting a poster on the railway station featured in the Rita Angus painting. His installation also includes a Des Helmore painting of Cass which does not include the shed. It adds more layers of reference to the palimpsest of New Zealand art.."

New Folk, Ramp Gallery, Hamilton, 10 Jun - 2 Jul, 2010

Martin Poppelwell, Sam Mitchell, Des Helmore, Gavin Hurley by Peter Dornauf, EyeContact, 2 Jul, 2010:

The current exhibition running at Ramp gallery, (in Waikato Wintec, Collingwood St) curated by Stuart Shepherd, consists of a suite of works selected from the Anna Bibby dealer gallery in Auckland.

"..Des Helmore's small oils on board of beach scenes and urban sites possess the geometric pared back look of Patrick Caulfield together with something out of Kitaj. These scenes, minus any figures, along with their muted restrained colours; greens, greys and browns, create an uneasy sense of estrangement and isolation that conjures up Edward Hopper's cityscapes without the claustrophobia. They are perfectly finished and hover ambiguously in their painterly style between hard edge Pop and softer Impressionism. A delectable mix..."

TJ McNamara: Enigmatic explorations on show (extract), NZ Herald, 10 Dec, 2011 DES HELMORE at Jane Sanders Art, 23 Nov, 2011 - 23 Dec, 2011

Being there. Where? NEW PAINTINGS

"..Des Helmore is having one of his rare exhibitions at Jane Sanders Art. He is an artist who cultivates enigma. He takes ordinary places, landscapes and buildings and combines them into paintings that are truly strange yet curiously familiar.

A work such as Parallel Universe combines sky, buildings, a puddle of water, a man and a shadow in a surreal way.

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Helmore is an old-fashioned painter. His draughtsmanship is impeccable as witnessed by his accurate scientific illustrations but there is no virtuoso flourish of drawing in his paintings: his forms are simple and clear. Rather his virtuosity is shown in his handling of paint. Skies and surfaces are deftly brushed in and the handling works in with his individual palette of dark, shadowy colour to give tension and life to the work.

The paintings in this exhibition have an extra energetic factor. Forms shatter into the sky and bits and pieces scatter about. Sometimes this makes the structure too open but generally the works are held together by strong compositions of angles, checks and balances. In a dark landscape called Drury fields and trees are curiously counterpointed by a gas tank and its piping. Reflections is animated by a tiny flash of white and the same sort of highlight enlivens other work.

These are fine paintings, carefully made, evoking wastelands and familiar territories. They evoke emotions but with no subtext of social comment..."

Artbash 2011,

DES HELMORE at Jane Sanders Art, 23 Nov, 2011 - 23 Dec, 2011 Being there. Where? NEW PAINTINGS

"..It is a simple fact that the computer has significantly changed the way we view our world. The iTunes page describes the app for Google Earth as holding "the world in the palm of your hand ... you can fly to far corners of the planet"; and all without leaving the comfort of your home. Do we in fact have a greater sense of the world? This is not the same as being there; but then reading a book has never been the same as being there. Des Helmore has always been fascinated with the environs around him, be it a rural or city landscape. He reduces details and brings the world around us into the abstract, yet with recognisable elements. It is often the seemingly incidental features, which provide attraction for Helmore and act as signifiers of the type of site being depicted. To explore via Google Earth and Google Maps we journey between pixilated somewhat fuzzy views as we zoom between locations and focus in. The surprise is what objects come to view during the process, and this is what intrigues Helmore. With Helmore though we explore a

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beautifully painted surface and marvel at his handling of the paint. Dick Frizzell in his latest book *Its all about the Image* sums it up with his account, “He crept up on all of us, after a gap of 30 or so years, figuring it out best, lost in science and the world of entomological analysis and recording. Honing the skills of observation and patient description...”

Helmore’s new suite of works *Being there, where?* will delight both those familiar and unfamiliar with his work, as he parles with Google Earth

