

1950 - 1969

TOWARDS A DEPARTMENT WITHIN THE POLYTECHNIC



Figure 31. Frederick Staub, *To the Biological, Dental, Physical and Medical Sciences*, 1955, cement bas relief sculpture on the University of Otago Dental School building (photograph courtesy of the *Otago Daily Times*).

At this time staff practice tended towards traditional art techniques and mannerisms, however, staff did encourage the art and craft trainees from the Dunedin Teachers College, who attended the School one day per week, to undertake a range of expressive techniques. Many of these would later become nationally significant artists.

The next twenty years would prove to be a period of mixed blessings.

In 1950 the School catered for numerous day and evening part-time students, 31 Technical College pupils taking art as an option, and for a half to one day per week, 12 Dunedin Teachers College Art and Craft Specialist students. There were no full-time students, and it is not surprising that the School was seen to be over-staffed with its five full-time teachers consisting of Mr Shewell, Mr Reed, Miss Moran, Mr Howie and Mr Entwistle. When Entwistle, who had been teaching Basketwork, Leatherwork and Weaving resigned and left for England in July to further his studies in metal-craft and other art subjects, he was not replaced due to the Board believing its limited funds could be better spent employing an additional teacher in one of the more heavily burdened areas, such as Mathematics, Science, English or Social Studies.¹

As a compromise, the Principal suggested that Mr Entwistle's craft subjects could possibly be replaced with modelling and pottery, which Mr Howie could teach once the recently approved new pottery kiln was installed.² The Principal was not to know that Howie would be moving on at the end of the year, at which time, Frederick C. W. Staub (1919-2012) DFA, Dip Tchg, FRSA, who had trained at the Canterbury University College of Art under the guidance of sculptor Francis Shurrock, was appointed as his replacement to teach sculpture and pottery.

The only major item of equipment to appear since the war was a replacement pottery kiln. It was initially requested by Shewell in 1949, approved for purchase in 1950 and finally constructed and ready for use in February 1952. "The first firing tests of the new kiln for pottery classes at the college were carried out this week by Mr O. C. Stephens, who is in charge of the firing and glazing operations. It was hoped that the kiln would be working last year. The brickwork was finished, but the waterfront strike delayed delivery of a vital part of the apparatus. Firing tests have now been carried out, and Mr F. C. W. Staub, who is in charge of modelling and designing for the pottery classes, is keen to see the work expanded."³ Approval was granted the following year (1953) for the production of a clay blunger and the purchase of a warming oven for glaze spraying.

From 1950, part-time classes were split by Shewell into three major areas and advertised under the following headings:

- Fine Arts: Painting, which included General Drawing, Still Life, Figure Drawing and Painting, Portraiture, Pictorial Composition, and Mural Design; Sculpture: which included Pottery and Modelling; and Print Making using wood-blocks, linocuts, and silkscreens.
- Home Arts: Needlework, which included the Principles of Design and Stitchery, Leather-work, and Fabric Printing using either linocuts or silk screens with basic dyes. Basketry and Book Binding were also offered, but were discontinued mid-year.
- Commercial Art: General Drawing, Fashion Drawing, Life Drawing, Lettering, Ticket-writing, Lay-out, Package and Label Design, Poster Design, and Commercial Processes of Reproduction.⁴

Fortunately for the School, these classes proved exceedingly popular as can be seen from an October 1950 newspaper report on the students' annual exhibition. "Numbering about 250 men and women of all ages, the 'part-timers' who form the bulk of the students attending the Art School, show in the exhibition that there is considerable talent among them. Housewives and workers in offices and factories have found time from their normal activities to devote many hours to their chosen crafts, and in so doing have produced articles of pottery, painting, sculpture, embroidery and fabric printing that not only fulfil the inner need for self-expression, but are objects of beauty. Under the guidance of the director of the School, Mr F. G. Shewell, and his assistants, students attend at all hours of the day and evening. Night classes are held on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, and it is to those that the majority go. The growing popularity of these activities demonstrates the keen interest in the arts that has arisen in the past few years and the appreciation of people in all walks of life of the benefit and pleasure to be derived from them."⁵

And, at the opening of the exhibition the Technical College Principal, Mr J. B. Barton was reported saying that he hoped that the Dunedin School of Art attached to the King Edward Technical College would become the spiritual centre for people in Dunedin interested in art, and he would like to see a core of senior full-time students doing work at the School.⁶ These comments appear to be the first signs of positivity for the School since the war.

Full-time student numbers may have been depressingly small, but part-time class attendance remained healthy and by the end of the 1950s and early 1960s, staffing in this area, in addition to Shewell, Reed and Staub, included; Mrs L. E. Coker teaching Needlework, Mrs P. Richan, Floral Art, Frank J. Dean, Still Life, Mrs M. D. Brown, Needlework, J. Donaldson, Ticket Writing and Commercial Art, A. T. Lascelles, Modelling and Pottery, Miss V. E. Paterson, Drawing and Painting, Miss Duffy, Creative Painting, and Douglas H. McGregor, Creative Painting.⁷



Figure 32. Cargill Street School of Art houses, 1966 (photograph by Jim Tomlin).

The School's saving grace, was that from the third term of 1949 to the end of 1962, Teacher College graduates from throughout New Zealand who wished to train as Art and Craft Specialists were, on Tovey's initiative, sent to the Dunedin Teachers College for a specialist year of training under the guidance of Murray Stevenson, who was then the Teachers College lecturer in charge of art. It was these students who largely provided the School with a senior student element over the following decade. Marilyn Webb, a student under this scheme commented that during the 1950s, Dunedin Teachers College third year art specialist students would once a week hike across Dunedin and up the Stuart Street hill to attend classes at the Dunedin School of Art at King Edward Technical College, in her case, silk screen printing run by Fred Shewell who, Marilyn remembered, enjoyed quoting and referring to European theorists, Jung and Tolstoy in particular. A number of her colleagues also attended part-time evening classes. A case in point would be Graham Storm, who gained his early knowledge of ceramics via Fred Staub's pottery classes.⁸

The time allocation for Art and Craft Specialist trainees was initially one day per week. In 1953 for example, on Wednesdays they had Design and Modern Art with Shewell from 9.20 to 12.20, then Drawing and Painting with Reed from 1.35 to 3.35.⁹ However, by 1959, required attendance had been trimmed back to all day Wednesday during the second term and each Friday afternoon during the second and third terms. This reduced allocation arose as a result of Tovey recommending to the Principal of the Teachers College that third year Art and Craft Specialist trainees should spend more time in local schools in order to “undertake work in developing design in the schools under the direction of the Art and Crafts specialists attached to the Education Board.”¹⁰

Many of these students would later become well-known names within the New Zealand art scene, particularly in the fields of Art Education, Contemporary Māori Arts, Painting, Pottery, Printmaking and Textiles. Trainees who studied at the School during this period included: Sandy Adsett, Jim Allen, Clive Arlidge, Catherine Brown, Brian Carmody, Frank Dean, John Drawbridge, John Bevan Ford, Betty Fraser, Fred Graham, Ralph Hotere, Mere Kururangi, Margaret Lawlor-Bartlet, Katarina Mataira, Para Matchitt, Shona McFarlane, Stanley Palmer, Yvonne Sloan, Graeme Storm, Ray Thorburn, Muru Walters, Marilyn Webb, and Cliff Whiting.¹¹

One staff member with whom art students had little contact, due to her working mainly in the Home Science field, was Helen Moran, who retired in 1958 after thirty years’ service, teaching Embroidery and Needlework. “Miss Moran is said to have passed on her techniques to as many as 10,000 Dunedin women in her long teaching career, during which she taught both day and evening classes. Through her own work and that of many of her pupils having been successfully entered in competitions, both her name and technique were renowned not only in Dunedin, but throughout the country and across the Tasman.”¹²

The first hint of structural change to technical education in Dunedin appeared in August 1959 when Dr Bernard Lee, Superintendent of Technical Education, during his address at the opening of the Technical College’s Jubilee Celebrations, referred to a recent decision by the Governors of the Seddon Memorial Technical College in Auckland to ‘split’ their institution into a separate day school and senior technical school, or polytechnic, and suggested that King Edward Technical College would likely face a similar decision in the near future.¹³

For the College, this process began in 1963 with the appearance of a paper from the Board of Studies Committee to the K.E.T.C Board of Managers, recommending that the Board consider supporting the establishment of up to seven major subject areas or schools within a possible Polytechnic Division of the College. The suggested fields were: Fine and Applied Arts, Architecture and Building, Commerce and Management, Engineering, Home Science, Music and Dramatic Arts, and Science and Technology. After considering the paper, the Board requested the Heads of these areas to provide it with tentative, yet detailed programmes which might be undertaken at the tertiary level. In the School of Art’s case, programmes suggested included the establishment of a course for a Certificate in Preliminary Art and Craft, a course for an Intermediate Certificate, and a Diploma in Art. The seven closely typed pages detailing the content of these programmes were, however, apparently too fine-arts oriented as the Board of Studies, after perusing the contents, recommended that “Commercial Advertising should be raised from a minor subject to a major subject with consequent adjustments”. It also proposed that part-time classes be based on full-time courses which would encourage students to take courses rather than subjects, and that wide publicity should be given to these courses, some on a New Zealand-wide basis, and for applications to close in November.¹⁴

In addition, the Board recommended that the teaching load for a School of Art within the Polytechnic Division should be 1.3 staff to cover day classes and the equivalent of 1 staff member to cover evening classes,¹⁵ and that three rooms be allocated to the School as specialist rooms with a further room set aside as a classroom.¹⁶ Further news, announced in November 1963 by the College Principal at the opening of the School of Art’s annual exhibition being held in the Dunedin Public Library, was that a two year diploma course would be introduced in 1965.¹⁷

His address coincided with the publication of the King Edward Technical College Polytechnic Division's first prospectus, which announced, under the heading of the School of Fine and Applied Art, the introduction of a Preliminary Art and Craft Course. "After a one year full-time course, commencing in February 1964, a successful student is issued with the Certificate in Preliminary Art and Craft of King Edward Technical College. The course is also a suitable preparation for those wishing to sit the Fine Arts Preliminary Examination of the University Grants Committee. The course containing as it does, English Language and Literature, History of Art, Drawing and Painting, Pictorial Composition and the Design and Practice of a Craft, is an excellent preparation for further art study or for entry into employment in fields such as orienting, bookbinding, window displays, and design and photography, where artistic knowledge and skill are necessary."¹⁸

The prospectus also announced that a two year full-time course titled 'Diploma in Art' would be introduced in February 1965, which would "cover to quite a high level" History of Art, Imaginative Design, Drawing and Painting, Technical Drawing and Illustration, Advertising and Layout and a chosen craft such as Pottery, Modelling, Embroidery, Fabric Printing, Puppetry, illustration for a book or magazine, or stage setting or costume of the theatre.¹⁹

The programme read well, but its student application response was dismal, as evidenced by a less than complimentary report from an Education Department inspector after his visit to the School in May 1964, which stated that the full-time day course contained only one Preliminary Fine Arts student and two very low ability commercial art students, which he considered was most uneconomic of staffing. He also commented that there appeared to be little support for adult day-time classes in comparison with the normal high school classes.²⁰ No mention was made of the art classes for College pupils aiming towards School Certificate, University Entrance or the Saturday morning classes for primary schools, all of which were still being taught by the staff.

In late 1964, and after much reflection, the College Board formally agreed to split the King Edward Technical College into a high school and a technical institute, as had already happened in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch, and in anticipation of the move, the tertiary sector was renamed the King Edward Technical College Polytechnic Division, and later, the Otago Polytechnic.²¹ In order to facilitate this move, nearby properties were purchased to allow for the development of the Polytechnic including a large house in Cargill Street, which was originally Strathcarron Hospital, and following a discussion with visiting Superintendent Dr Bernard Lee, it was put to the Board "that the Art School vacate the present art block and that all Polytechnic art classes be conducted in the Hospital. The Principal discussed this with the art staff the following day and they were very enthusiastic about the idea, although they felt that the Hospital alone was not large enough for the purpose. However, the property previously owned by Aitchison next door and now owned by the Polytechnic had some very large rooms and the two together could make an Art School which would be very individual."²²

In November the following year, a local newspaper, quoting Frederick Staub, who had become responsible for art on Shewell's recent retirement, announced that "Two existing houses are to be completely remodelled inside and joined by a covered walk from top floor of one to the ground floor of the other. Interior work was started three weeks ago and was scheduled to be completed by February 1, 1966. There was to be a ceramics and sculpture studio, a painting studio, one for graphic work, a drawing, design and drafting studio, as well as a general studio for full-time students. Two electric and one oil-fired ceramic kiln would be installed. Fluorescent lighting would be a feature of the school with colour matching tubes being installed to simulate daylight. The School of Fine and Applied Arts would be the first school in the new Polytechnic block to be housed. ... Full-time classes would include a certificate course in preliminary fine and applied arts and a diploma course. If sufficient students applied a course in fabrics would be instituted."²³

Although the Polytechnic separated from the Technical College in February 1966, the College Board continued to administer both entities until an Executive Committee of the Polytechnic was established, which held its first meeting on 21 June in the Polytechnic's newly designated Council Room located on the top floor of what

had been the School of Art building. Less than two months later a new Board was constituted for the Technical College, and a Council was established to govern the Polytechnic.²⁴

The School of Art now became a section within the General and Science Department of the Polytechnic, under the headship of Eric G. Hasell, and had five full-time staff consisting of a Course Supervisor, Frederick Staub teaching Sculpture and Ceramics, and tutors Bill Reed, Drawing and Painting, Bruce Wilson, DFA, who had recently been appointed to teach Graphic Design and Printmaking, Mrs D. L. Allen, Weaving, Needlework, Embroider, Dying and Spinning, and Mrs B. L. Calvert, whose teaching subjects were unlisted. Part-time staff included Barbara Cave, Frank Dean and Douglas McGregor, teaching various aspects of Drawing and Painting, Mrs J. H. Simmers, Floral Art, and L. J. S. Vial, Ticket Writing and Commercial Art. In 1967 four additional part-time staff were employed to help cope with the ever increasing popularity of the part-time classes. They were I. T. Lascelles, teaching Ceramics, A. J. Neil and R. G. Routledge, Architectural Drawing and Draughting, and Lawson Fraser. Also, Raymond Ward, (1925-2003) BA (Hons), an English and Liberal Studies tutor in the Science and General Department, began tutoring Art History to the School's students.

In the Polytechnic's Prospectus for 1967 a plethora of art courses were offered, including a Polytechnic approved three year full-time programme in which successful students completing year one would be awarded a Preliminary Fine and Applied Arts Certificate, year two, an Intermediate Certificate, and year three, the Diploma in Fine and Applied Arts. These were retitled 'Diploma in Fine and Applied Arts Stage 1, 2 and 3' the following year. These courses could also be studied part-time, but would take double the time to complete. Seven subjects were listed as compulsory for years one and two; Liberal Studies, History of Arts, Drawing and Layout Composition, Painting, Lettering Layout and Composition, Sculpture, and Ceramics. Students would also attend tutorials and work on projects, and in the third year undertake "... two subjects from the prescription which he or she intends to study with particular assiduity." A range of 'Part-Time Certificates' would also be available to hobby class students, including, certificates in Painting, Ceramics, Sculpture, Graphics, and Fabrics. In addition, a two year part-time course was available to kindergarten trainees and a course in Architectural and Presentation Drawing would be run for the School of Architecture and Building.²⁵ Only two students initially applied to enter the full-time programme, which they both successfully completed three years later, at which time the School had a complement of 449 part-time students, and twenty students entering the first year of the Diploma.



Figure 33. Frederick C.W. Staub, 1968 (photograph from the Otago Polytechnic Prospectus 1969).

Setting up the new art rooms now became a staff priority and of the equipment requested, items to the value of \$2668 were approved including the establishment of a permanent reference collection of slides, filmstrips and prints, and for the Ceramics section, a grinding mill, a ball mill, and later, two electric pottery wheels.²⁶ In support of finding appropriate reference material, Staub was given leave in July 1968 to inspect those available at the School of Fine Arts in Christchurch and the School of Design in Wellington in order to gauge how to best spend the funds allocated for this purpose. However, as he gave only a verbal report to the Council on

his return, there is no record of his findings.²⁷ From this point, staff, conscientiously and ever more ambitiously, sought Government funding to purchase new and essential equipment for the betterment of their students.

In his Annual Report to the Council for 1969, the Polytechnic Principal stated that the School of Fine and Applied Arts had introduced three dimensional metal fabrications, and interesting pieces of metal sculpture had been produced, also that “a new method of silk screen printing from photographic stencils has been permanently introduced as this eliminates expensive blocks. Electric kilns have been installed and new glazing techniques are being treated experimentally. The jewellery course has been further developed to include basic handling techniques for metals, and that 12 week tapestry weaving classes had been successfully introduced.”²⁸

Staub resigned from the Course Supervisor’s position in 1969 to be replaced by Bill Reed who agreed to accept the position temporarily while the position was being advertised, and four new part-time staff were employed; John Sutherland to teach Ceramics, P. K. Morrison, Jewellery, L. J. Parkinson, Presentation Drawing, and Mrs E. J. Smith, Drawing and Painting. The Course Supervisor’s position was advertised in late 1970 and Roy James Dickson, (1923-2012) DFA, Dip Tchg, an ex-student of the School, a nationally recognised watercolourist, member of the New Zealand Art Society, President of the Invercargill Public Art Gallery Society from 1960 to 1970 and Head of Art at Southland Technical College, was appointed to the position. Bruce Wilson, responsible for Graphic Design and Printmaking, resigned the same year and was replaced by Walden Larimon Tucker (1932-2006), New Zealand born, European trained at Kingston-Upon-Thames Art School, ARA and Rome Scholar, and Malcolm Murchie, BA, Dip Tchg, was appointed to head up the newly titled, Art and General Education Department of Otago Polytechnic, which included the School of Fine and Applied Art.

- 1 K.E.T.C. Principal's Report to Executive on Art School Staffing. 24 April 1950. (Hocken. AG-763-003/013)
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 *Otago Daily Times*. 25 February 1952: 5.
- 4 Material from K.E.T.C. Prospectuses. 1950 to 1959.
- 5 *Evening Star*. 30 October 1950: 4.
- 6 Ibid. 3 October 1950. 3
- 7 K.E.T.C. 1962 Prospectus for Evening and Part-time Classes.
- 8 Author interview with Marilyn Webb. 13 July 2009.
- 9 K.E.T.C. Prospectus for 1954 Day and Evening Part-time Classes.
- 10 Letter from Principal of the Teachers' College to Principal of K.E.T.C. 17/12/ 58. (Hocken. AG-763-010/031)
- 11 Hardie, Roger. *The Buds of Flowering*. Alexander Turnbull Library. 2005: 101-103.
- 12 Galer, Lois. 'Remember the Staff'. *Otago Daily Times*. 18 May 1985: 25.
- 13 *Otago Daily Times*. 20 August 1959: 2.
- 14 K.E.T.C. Board of Management Paper: 15/63. (Hocken. AG-763-003/014)
- 15 K.E.T.C. Board of Studies Paper: 5/63. (Hocken. AG-763-005/001)
- 16 Ibid. 24/63.
- 17 *Otago Daily Times*. 6 November 1963: 11.
- 18 K.E.T.C. Polytechnic Division Full Time Courses. 1964.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Inspection Report on King Edward Technical College. 4-8 May 1964. (Hocken. AG-763-010/030)
- 21 Dougherty, Ian. *Bricklayers and Mortarboards*. (Dunmore Press. 1999) 217-218.
- 22 Visit of Dr B. C. Lee. K.E.T.C. Board of Management Paper: 53/64. 2. (Hocken. AG-763-003/015)
- 23 *Evening Star*. 5 November 1965: 4.
- 24 Ibid. 13 July 1966: 2.
- 25 Otago Polytechnic Prospectus. 1966: 9-13.
- 26 Otago Polytechnic Requisitions. 1967 & 1969.

- 27 K.E.T.C. Board of Studies Paper: 48/68. (Hocken. 86-022 box 6)
- 28 Annual Report to Council from the Principal for 1969. Paper C27/70. (Hocken. 86-022 box 6)