

1976 - 1986

GOVERNMENT RECOGNITION AND RELOCATION



Figure 38. Derek Ball, *Kinetic Wind Sculpture*, 1981, lacquered aluminium, Civic Plaza, Dunedin (photograph Pam McKinlay).

After a hiatus of some forty years, contemporary fine arts techniques and practice once again appeared in the School's curriculum and in staff presentations. The Diploma in Fine Arts was granted degree equivalence, and staff held their first ever joint public exhibition.

By 1976 the Diploma in Fine and Applied Arts roll had increased to 101 students, including 18 in stage three, a second, full-time, year was being sought for the Ceramics Certificate and the Art Conservation programme was flourishing. The Ceramics section gained the School's first full-time subject-specific technician in Chris Powley, CC. R.E.S.T., who would hold the position for the next 26 years, Jan Wilson was appointed part-time to teach Textiles, and construction began on a photographic darkroom suite in Cargill St, which would be equipped by the Department of Education over the next two years to the value of \$4,000.

The School had now grown sufficiently to be classified as a stand-alone department within the Polytechnic rather than merely a subsection within a larger department, resulting in the Polytechnic Council advertising the position of Head of Department. The successful applicant was James (Jim) R. Tomlin, DFA, Dip Tchg, Dip Ed Admin, an established artist and Head of the Art Department at Queen Elizabeth College in Palmerston North. As his recent research had focused on the history of the administration of art education in New Zealand, he was aware of the School's historical achievements and looked forward to playing a part in the School once again becoming a significant New Zealand tertiary art provider. He was appointed in August 1976, and did not turn down the offer of a full-time secretary, Patricia (Pat) Jackson, who came on staff the following year, and who would remain with him as a supportive and indispensable colleague throughout his tenure.

Tomlin sought and gained approval to have the Diploma in Fine and Applied Arts, renamed 'Diploma in Fine Arts', bringing it in line with the university diplomas, and was keen to see the Diploma recognised as a three year degree equivalent programme, using entry to the secondary teaching profession as his main argument. In a letter to the Department of Education in 1977, he wrote, "For several years the Department of Education, Post Primary Teachers' Association and numerous principals have wondered how the secondary art teacher shortage problem could be solved. The course recommended here has been carefully researched and offers a sound and practical solution towards easing the situation. The qualification 'Diploma in Fine Arts' will be of equal merit to those offered by Auckland and Canterbury Universities. This case is assisted by the fact that the University Schools of Fine Arts have limited facilities, thus restricted entry, and can no longer cope with the demand for graduates to join the teaching profession. Reasons for the Diploma in Fine Arts to be of degree equivalence: Students have equal pre-entry requirements as for university. Students work much longer hours than their university counterparts. The course is as demanding as university fine arts diploma courses. Will assist towards improving the standard of art education in New Zealand by increasing the number of qualified art teachers at no extra cost to the Department, [and] will help towards relieving the art teacher shortage."¹

The School was inspected by Ray Thorburn, Education Officer for Art Education from the Curriculum Development Division of the Department of Education, in November, who reported that "The overall standard of work seen in practical situations and as shown in the third year submission display does not merit university degree equivalence." And recommended, "that there be no change in the status of the school at present, but that the situation should be reviewed at the end of 1980 which should be the final submission of the first of the new intake."²

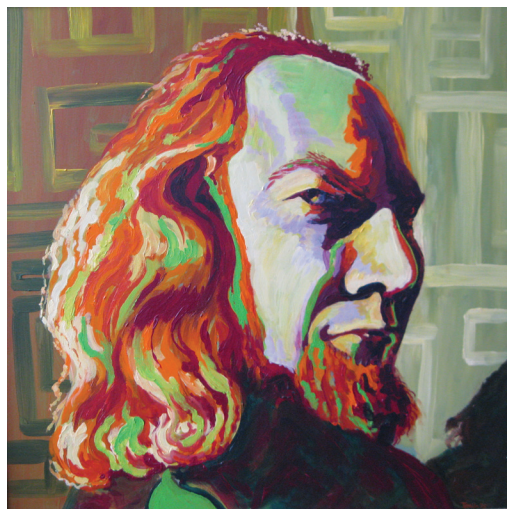


Figure 39. Portrait of Jim Tomlin by Sheila (Sam) Ramage, 1975, oil on board, 580 x 580 mm.

Attached to the report was a letter to the Polytechnic from M. H. Biggs, Director General of Education, saying that "The decision of the qualifications co-ordinating committee will be published in due course in the Education Gazette. The committee, in reaching its decisions, may or may not be influenced by the recommendations of the Document."³ It would take a further year for the Department to come to a decision in favour of the School.



Figure 40. Jim Tomlin at time of appointment, 1976.

Full and part-time student and staff numbers continued to grow. In 1977, part-time staff had increased to 16, covering 40 part-time classes, and full-time staff to 12,⁴ including recently appointed Neil Grant, DFA, Dip Tchg, an experienced exhibiting potter and then Head of the Art Department at Takapuna Grammar School in Auckland, who was tasked with heading up the Ceramics section with the title of Course Supervisor. Trumic became responsible for the ceramics content of the three-year Diploma programme and Grant for the Ceramics Certificate course, and in addition, Kevin Griffin and Judith Pairman, CC, were employed part-time to help cover the growing number of Ceramics

classes. Sculpture also featured staff movement with the retirement of Fred Staub, a nationally recognised sculptor who had been with the School since 1951. His position was filled by Derek Ball, DFA, Dip Tchg, MFA, and Frances Hodgkins Fellow, an established artist and sculptor with teaching experience in New Zealand, England and America. Alex Leonard came on part-time to teach woodwork to Diploma students as an adjunct to Sculpture; Peter King, DFA, was appointed Sculpture's first full-time technician, and Shaun Burdon, DFAA, who would be with the School for some thirty years, joined the staff part-time to teach painting.

By 1978 the Polytechnic was rapidly out-growing its present accommodation and a new site was being considered. In September the Otago Daily Times reported that "Alternative plans for redevelopment of Otago Polytechnic near Dunedin Teachers College will be investigated immediately, the Minister of Education the Hon. L.W. Gander, said in Parliament yesterday." And adjacent to this statement was the comment, "The Department of Education will hold discussions next week with the Otago Polytechnic Council, the Dunedin Teachers College and the Dunedin City Council about an alternative plan to redevelop the Polytechnic on a site near the Teachers College in the area bounded by Forth, Union and St David Streets and Harbour Terrace."⁵ Although it would be some years before this eventuated, staff began looking forward to such a move.

Growth also required additional equipment, and Education Department approval was granted for a range of purchases, including a developing unit for Photography, two Charles Brand printing presses for Graphics – one for etching and one for lithography – and materials to construct a vacuum forming machine for Sculpture along with a Speedline sheet metal guillotine and Lectric slip-rolls for sheet metal forming.

The students' end of year exhibition was this time accommodated in two establishments, the Otago Art Society Gallery and the Connoisseur Gallery. "The first contains over 90 exhibits by Fine Arts Diploma students who have just completed their third year. The exhibits fall into several categories: painting, preparatory studies, life drawing, printmaking, sculpture and ceramics. The School of Art, under the direction of Mr J. R. Tomlin, has changed markedly in the past two years and, to judge by this exhibition, is entering a new phase, particularly in the field of sculpture. But the work in general, shows solid accomplishment, with some flashes of budding talent to make it lively viewing. The second exhibition consists of work by students who have just completed the one year full-time course for the Ceramics Certificate. Although much of it can be defined as functional or domestic, the attention which has been paid to design, as well as to the acquisition of manual confidence and expertise, distinguishes it sharply from the average product."⁶

1979 saw a turning point in the School's history with the publication in the January issue of the Education Gazette listing the School's Diploma in Fine Arts as degree equivalent.⁷ At last, after 109 years, the School's programme had finally received formal Government recognition. There was considerable in-house jubilation.

At that time staff changes included Ian Hoskins teaching wood working skills, replacing Alex Leonard, John Tarlton joined the staff to teach Printmaking, and Francis Pound, MA, was appointed to assist Raymond Ward in Art History. A significant appointment at this time was that of Peter Nicholls, MFA, DFA (Hons), Dip Tchg, joining Derek Ball in the Sculpture section. Nicholls, a nationally respected sculptor who had been Head of Art at Takapuna Grammar, and had just arrived back from representing New Zealand at the Edmonton Commonwealth Games Sculpture Symposium along with acting as a graduate assistant at the University of Wisconsin, would be on staff for the next twenty two years. Now, for the first time, all Diploma subjects had at least two full-time specialist staff members on which to call.



Figure 41. Titus Chan tutoring Fine Art Conservation, 1976 (photo Dunedin School of Art Archives).

An observational treat for students presented itself in March due to the presence of a Māori carver, Greg Whakataka, who visited the School under the sponsorship of the New Zealand Student Arts Council's artist on campus scheme. "Mr Whakataka (26) is visiting eight polytechnics and teachers' colleges throughout the country to give people a greater understanding of an unfamiliar art form and to provide them with the opportunity to see the creative process in action. While in Dunedin he will demonstrate to students and artists the complete process of carving the Maori goddess Rona. Although the figure is traditional because it depicts an ancestress of Maori mythology, the design is an original interpretation."⁸ The completed figure, standing some five feet tall and taking around fifty hours to carve, was presented to the Polytechnic for permanent display. Unfortunately, it was removed from the Polytechnic some years later, and neither the culprit nor sculpture has been seen since.

The School's improving image was expressed in a 1980 memo from Ted Aitchison, Principal of the Polytechnic, when he commented, "I am taking the unusual step of making and writing comments to an HOD following rounds. I was most impressed with the work I saw when visiting the Art Department last week... the thing that impressed me most was the attitude of staff and students. All classes showed a sense of purpose, direction and skill. Staff went out of their way to ensure that I was given an adequate explanation of the work being done and any other matters under discussion. Would you please convey my appreciation to all staff."⁹

And Peter Entwisle, art critic, historian and Curator of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, in a newspaper article under the title "Revolution at the Art School," wrote, "About 1970 it reached one of its periodic rock bottom lows. It had only three full-time students and its long history of teaching the fine arts was being rapidly abandoned as its curriculum was redrawn to give it a mainly commercial bias. To all intents and purposes, it looked as though Dunedin might have trained its last professional artist. Now only ten years later, the whole picture is different - and a lot better. There are 132 students working for the school diploma; the course takes three years and the qualification is accepted as the equivalent of a university bachelor's degree. Its ceramics department and print department are particularly well equipped. With sculpture they're the best set-up departments of their kind in

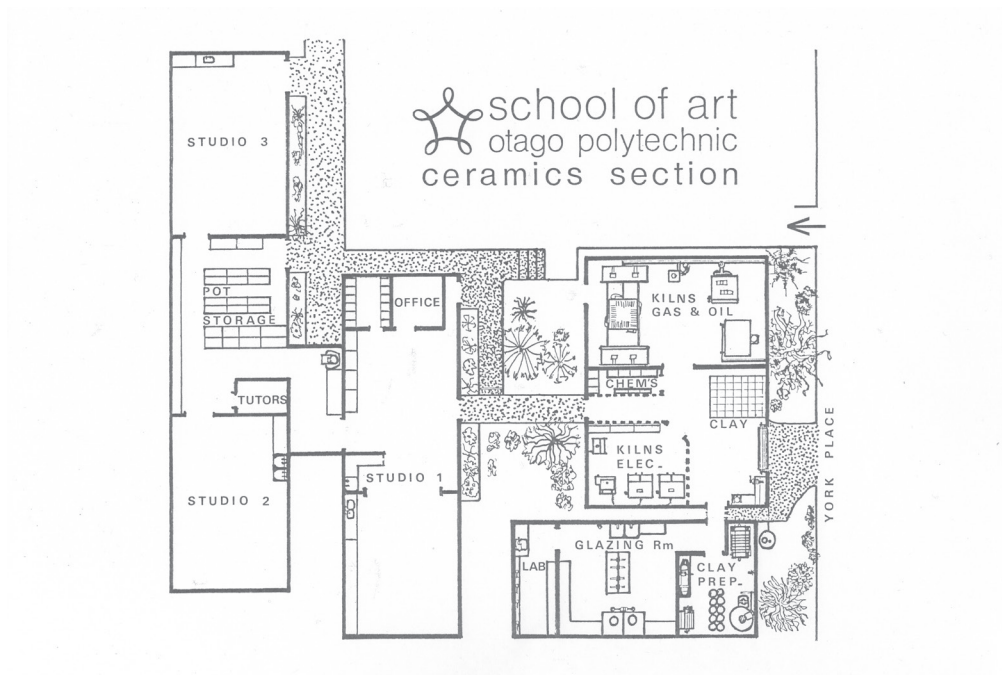


Figure 42. Plan of the ceramics block in York Place, c. 1982.

the country. The school will soon move into a new purpose built building down on Forth St as the Polytechnic moves to its new location in the North End over the next four or five years. The man who must accept quite a lot of blame for all this success is Jim Tomlin, who arrived at the school at the beginning of 1977 and leads the staff of fourteen full-time tutors. He has built up the course that uncompromisingly aims to turn out people properly equipped to teach art in secondary schools or to become professional artists. It is very, very refreshing to come across a man and a school committed to educating people without aiming chiefly at fitting the students out with a handy meal ticket. Anyway, I like the Dunedin school's uncompromisingly high standards and aims - and to judge by the queue to get in, the students like it too.²⁹¹⁰

The 1980 Government equipment grant allowed for, in addition to a range of minor items, the purchase of two Arum ceramic fibre electric kilns, a further skeleton to replace one that had been recently stolen, and Durston jewellery rollers for manipulating silver. And over the following years, serious equipment purchases continued to be approved, including a forge, a lost wax burn-out kiln and metal casting facilities for Sculpture, several new kilns for Ceramics, further printing presses for Printmaking including an electric silk screen printing press, replacement sets of easels for Drawing and Painting, and an influx of slides and filmstrips for Art History along with film and slide projectors.¹¹ The School was becoming worthy of envy by its peers.

A disappointment that year was the closure, due to lack of Government support, of the Fine Arts Conservation programme at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery run by Les Lloyd, and since 1976, with the able assistance of the Gallery's full-time fine arts conservator, Titus Chan.

Staff movement over the next few years included Francis Pound, tutoring Art History, resigning, to be replaced by Wallace Crossman, DFA, Dip Tchg, and Head of the Art Department at Penrose High School in Auckland. Owen Lee left and Walden Tucker picked up his drawing classes, and John Tarlton decided to move north, resulting in Chris de Jong taking over responsibility for Printmaking. David Jowett, technician for Printmaking who had



Figure 43. Students in front of the newly opened School of Art in Albany Street, 1984.

been in the position for one year, resigned to be replaced by Peter Dreadon, DFA, and Andrew Cameron, DFA, replaced Peter King as a technician for Sculpture. The following year, Ross Richards, tutoring Ceramics, who had been with the School for only two years, resigned and Geoff Wilson, DFAA, a tutor at the Southland Community College, was appointed to his position. Roland Munro, DFA, tutored Metalwork for two years, and Peter Ritchie was appointed photographic technician for Printmaking in 1981 to be followed by Lloyd Godman, TC. Dip Prof Photo (USA), two years later.

Roy Dickison's retirement in 1982 saw the departure of a significant member of staff. He had been responsible for the School from 1970-1976 and had been in charge of the Drawing and Painting section from 1977. He was an inspiring and enthusiastic teacher, and a highly respected and much exhibited watercolourist. He moved to Frankton from which he and his wife Athalie spent many years touring the South Island in their camper van, stopping in places he felt had potential for painting, later commenting, "You can't really get much more of an idyllic life, to get there and park overnight and wake in the morning and paint it."¹²

Other staff movements included Arthur Skill being appointed technician for Sculpture in 1983 and in 1984 Sharon Roberts was added to the clerical staff, but moved on within a year to be replaced by Catherine Todd. These changes proved fortuitous, as the majority of full-time staff now employed would stay with the School for many years.

The Polytechnic, then housed in the old King Edward Technical College, in addition to a number of old houses and numerous prefabricated buildings, had at last found a suitable site within the Teachers College – University precinct, which could accommodate a set of appropriately designed purpose built buildings, and the architectural firm of Allingham, Harrison & Partners was commissioned by the Department of Education in 1980 to design and oversee construction. The School of Art, for which plans were completed in August 1981, was to be housed in a two story block, titled Block G within the proposed complex,¹³ and to help gain ideas



Figure 44. Sculpture student Philip McGregor at the spray booth, 1984 (photo by Lloyd Godman).

for the layout of the workshop sections of sculpture and ceramics, Ball received Arts Council funding in 1982 to undertake a survey of sculpture department facilities in England and the USA. However, prior to Block G plans being approved for tender, a nearby group of buildings became available and worthy of consideration, the old Dunedin North Intermediate School, sited on the corner of Albany Street and Anzac Avenue, and recently vacated by the Teachers College. Specifications for an extensive makeover of these buildings, which took into consideration material gleaned by Ball on his recent trip, were produced in June 1983,¹⁴ and the School began making plans for another move. "All students next year will enjoy improved facilities easily on a par with overseas institutions," Deputy Principal, Des Watson said yesterday."¹⁵

What staff would find were for Drawing and Painting, 3 studios, 2 tutor offices, 9 small individual senior student studios and 3 storerooms; Printmaking, 2 large printmaking workshops, 2 tutor offices and 5 individual small senior student studios; Photography, which at this stage was an adjunct to Printmaking, 1 large 8 bay dark room, 2 small darkrooms, 1 tutor office and a reprographic room; Sculpture, 2 studios,

6 specialist workshops covering forging and foundry processes, ceramic shell metal casting, wood sculpture, clay and plaster working, a machine shop which included plastic vacuum forming, a fume room, a 3 person tutor office, a technician's office and numerous small storage rooms; Ceramics, 3 studios, 4 tutor offices, along with a new 8 room complex to accommodate a range of kilns, casting processes, glaze room and laboratory, pot storage, clay processing, etc.; Art History, 2 lecture theatres, 1 small tutorial room, 2 tutor offices and a resource storage room, and finally, 3 front of house offices for administration and a nearby staff room.¹⁶

The School transferred to the new complex in late January 1984, and in February, received a two day inspectorial visit from the Department's Curriculum Development Officer, Dr Ray Thorburn. There had been a seven year gap since his previous visit and this time his report, which was published by the Department of Education on 28 June, was rather more complimentary, stating that "The School of Art at Otago Polytechnic is one of the best equipped in New Zealand for the training of fine artists and ceramicists."¹⁷

His recommendations included, "Although equipped to a high level and accommodated in excellent buildings, the art school lacks a gallery exhibition space. This is a serious omission for a training programme of this type. An important aspect of fine art students' professional training is the planning, presentation and promoting of their work. There is a similar need for ceramicists. People wishing to become full-time potters, ceramic designers or artists, must have a strong grounding in market research, production, promotion and presentation of their products. The School of Art, because of its isolation from major art centres, would benefit from tutor exchange opportunities between sister institutions in New Zealand as well as overseas. There is a clear need for a fourth year or honours year for students of outstanding ability. A fourth year diploma course, with a two year ceramics programme which would also feed into advanced diploma training for outstanding people, would make full use of the outstanding facilities."¹⁸

Occupancy of the new buildings was later formalised through a ceremonial opening by the Minister of Education on the morning of May 30th. In addition to the speakers, the Chairman of Council, the Principal of the Polytechnic and the Minister of Education, assembled guests included the School's 16 day-time staff, directors of public and private art institutions and the heads of all Polytechnic departments. The directive for the occasion stated that "After the opening and morning tea the official party will be shown around the School by the Head of Department Art. The remaining guests to be shown around the School in small groups."¹⁹ Thus occupying most staff, all of whom had relaxed duties due to the day being classified as a public open day.

To help improve the level of students' professional expertise, the Diploma in Fine Arts syllabus was revised that year to limit students to two major subjects only, in their second year, choosing from Painting, Printmaking, Sculpture and Ceramics, then, as had been the practice since 1973, narrowing this to one subject in the third year. However, all students were still required to take weekly, at least three hours of Drawing and Art History at all levels.

The School received some appreciated national publicity via an article in the 1985 February issue of the NZ Art News, which noted that "At the beginning of last year the School moved from the old Polytechnic site to what had been a school near the Teacher Training College, and was furnished [to the surprise of its staff] with every sort of equipment that had been asked for, making it arguably the best equipped art school in the country. The emphasis of its teaching is on the acquisition of technical skills. Students undertake a more general course than at other art schools, specialising in two subjects in their second year and only one in their final year. The staff-student contact time is twenty-two hours a week, in line with other Polytechnic courses. It is hoped that during the next couple of years, a fourth, honours year will be added to the Diploma course, and that the ceramics course will be extended to two years."²⁰

An initiative of Derek Ball was the birth of the School's 'Artists in Residence' programme which began that year and was described in a later accreditation document as, "The artist in residence is a person invited to be based in the School of Art for the purpose of doing their own work. The residency may be from three months to an academic year in duration. The Art School provides accommodation and studio space and the QEII Arts Council provides a financial allowance to the artist for living expenses." It aimed to "develop a stimulating working environment for students, provide an artist with the opportunity to work for a period of time unhindered by financial concerns, provide the artist with a change of climate, and provide for interaction between the artist, students, staff and the community outside the School. The artist in residence has informal contact with students and staff, but does not have any teaching commitment within the School."²¹ The programme was initially funded by the Dunedin Public Art Gallery in partnership with the QEII Arts Council, and managed by Ball. The first artist to take up residency was printmaker Denise Copeland in 1985, followed by Alan Pearson, painter, in 1986, and by many others over the ensuing years.

Also, in 1985, staff of the School came together for the first time to participate in a joint exhibition. This was written up in the *Otago Daily Times* under the title, 'Testing Time for Tutors'. "This exhibition at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery is a milestone in the history of the Otago Polytechnic School of Art. It is the first occasion on which all full-time tutors have shown work together. Judging from the well-designed catalogue by Tom Field, Lloyd Godman and Raymond Ward, the attractive poster and the arrangement of work on display, much time and thought has gone into producing a show which will most certainly enhance the image of the art school in the minds of people in the community. It is very pleasing to see such diversity – drawings, paintings, prints, sculpture and ceramics – displayed together in such spacious surroundings in a way that makes it possible to view each artist individually."²²

Of interest to staff was a mid-year announcement by the Minister of Education, Russell Marshall, that a fund for craft education had been allowed for in the 1985 Budget. "Crafts are currently earning New Zealand \$40 million a year here and overseas, and the market is expanding. They are also an excellent way of reducing unemployment.



Figure 45. Student Liz Barton at the litho press, 1982 (photo by Lloyd Godman).

Every trained person producing crafts creates five related jobs in administration, galleries, material supplies, transport and export.”²³ The School chose not to argue these impressive sounding facts and successfully applied to the Department of Education for permission to run the newly titled ‘Foundation Course in Craft Design’.

“Where better to set up a craft education course than Otago Polytechnic? Nine other technical institutes and community colleges will join with Otago by offering craft education courses next year. Each course will take up to 18 trainees and will probably attract school leavers,’ says Neil Grant, ceramics course supervisor at Otago Polytechnic. ‘We’ve already had people ringing up and asking when they should apply. It’s an exciting area. The first year of the course at Otago will involve the technical skills of working with clay, wood and metal. Students will spend two thirds of their time on campus, and one

third in workplaces alongside crafts people. In the second year students will specialise in their chosen area and, at the end of the year, receive a certificate.”²⁴

An equipment grant of \$28,000, which included the purchase of nine 4-shaft table-loom and an 8-shaft floor loom totalling \$7,000, was approved by the Department of Education for setting up the programme,²⁵ indicating that spinning and weaving would also become an integral part of the course, at least in Otago. This no doubt had something to do with the Polytechnic having appointed a textiles enthusiast, Elizabeth Evans to administer the course, starting in February 1986.

The School’s Certificate in Craft Design brochure published in late 1985 stated, “This course aims at providing education in craft design for those hoping to pursue a career in vocational arts. On completion of the course, participants will have studied a range of craft options, advertising and marketing, drawing and design, workshop techniques, sociology and psychology of design, science and materials, and cultural influences in crafts. Crafts covered (provisional only), Ceramics; hand and wheel; Metal; Jewellery, Wood; carving, toy making and craft furniture, and Textiles; wool weaving, batik/dyeing, printing, felt and stuffed stuff.”²⁶ This was one of three new programmes which the School would be introducing in the New Year.

In November, it was announced that the Department of Education had approved the long sought after fourth, or Honours year to the Diploma in Fine Arts,²⁷ which for teaching salary purposes would be recognised as an MA equivalent.²⁸ This also began in February 1986 with four postgraduate students selected for the programme. Its description stated that “A postgraduate year is available to outstanding students for further development of their specialist field. Honours students work largely on their own, but tutors are available for assistance when required. Postgraduates and current third year students may apply. Assessment of work is based mainly on the quality and level of achievement evidenced through the student’s end of year exhibition for which the student is solely responsible.”²⁹ Students were also required to present a portfolio containing a typed written statement of ideas and development, working methods and materials, and possible future developments, along with a curriculum vitae and photographic documentation of work in progress and completed.³⁰

The third new programme to be approved for commencement in February, was a second year to the Ceramics Certificate, titled, ‘Advanced Ceramics Certificate’.³¹ And, not surprisingly, additional staff was required to assist

with the growing teaching load. As Geoff Wilson had recently resigned, two new full-time appointments were made in the form of Christine Boswijk, CC, who stayed with the School for three years before moving on, and Lawrence Ewing, TTC, an established potter, who would be with the staff for the next decades. He rapidly became acknowledged as the School's master of glaze chemistry, and whose research into glaze technology would later lead to his designing the internationally acclaimed 'Matrix Glaze Calculation Software'. He, also, along with input from Dave Watts and Neil Grant, was responsible for developing the School's first website, which eventually expanded to become the Polytechnic's website.

The second year to the Ceramics Certificate aims were stated as, "Second year students will expand their skills and professional confidence through extended workshop practice. They will specialise in a chosen ceramic area so that they will have a good understanding of the problems within this area and will reach an acceptable level of artistic skill, craftsmanship and commercial viability. Where it is appropriate, students will be given the opportunity to work off campus with acknowledged master craftspeople. Their potential as creative craftspeople will at all times be of paramount importance and to this end the Complementary Studies area is most important. In addition to 'major' and 'minor' specialist study areas all students will take; (1) Drawing and Design, (2) Glaze chemistry, (3) Kiln design/construction/technology, (4) Complementary Studies, [consisting of] (a) History/theory/design, (b) Research assignments, (c) Business accounting, (d) Product costing, (e) Exhibition administration and practice."³² With the simultaneous introduction of three new major programmes, interesting and busy times were ahead.

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- 4 Otago Polytechnic Prospectus. 1977.
- 5 *Otago Daily Times*. 23 September 1978: 1.
- 6 *Ibid*. 13 November 1978: 6.
- 7 *Education Gazette*, Vol. 58, No 2. 31 January. 1979: 15.
- 8 *Otago Daily Times*. 28 March 1979: 5.
- 9 Aitchison, E. C. Principal. *Memorandum to Head of Department Art from Principal*. 5 May 1980.
- 10 Entwisle, Peter. "Revolution in the Art School." *The Star* (Christchurch) Dunedin edition. 13 August 1980: 9.
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- 27 *Otago Daily Times*. 14 November 1985: 24.

- 28 *Education Gazette*. 15 September 1988: 727.
- 29 School of Art Otago Polytechnic brochure. 1987.
- 30 School of Art Otago Polytechnic. Honours Year Code of Practice. 1989.
- 31 Young, N. for Department of Education. *Approval Reference Document*. E25/28A. 29 October. 1985.
- 32 Advanced Ceramics Certificate Proposal Document. Otago Polytechnic. September 1985.

