

Significant Marcus King Paintings Held at Otago Museum Come to Light

A recently published book on New Zealand artist Marcus King has drawn attention to two paintings currently residing in the Otago Museum collection.

Peter Alsop and Warren Feeney, authors of *Marcus King Painting New Zealand for the World*, were intrigued to hear that the Museum housed two of King's paintings after being contacted by Curator, Humanities Moira White as a result of publicity surrounding the book's release.

The two pieces, *Landing of the Maoris* (1952) and *Entering Whitianga* (undated), were bequeathed to the Museum by Dr Lindsay Rogers, who was also a significant benefactor of the Museum's ancient Near East collections. Both Rogers and King were interested in the Māori history of New Zealand.

Alsop considers the two paintings very fine examples of King's works.

"King was greatly enthused about reconstructing the reality of customs, artefacts and the life of Māori, giving his paintings sincerity and even a documentary effect," he said. "Both the Museum's works relate to the arrival of Māori to New Zealand. They works showcase King's penchant for voluptuous clouds and captivating light over water, with the works beautifully rendered in a colour palette that can only be Marcus King."

Marcus King (1891–1984) was a Taranaki-born New Zealand artist. He attended evening classes at Elam School of Art in Auckland while he was a cadet in the architectural division of the Public Works Department. Best known for the travel posters he produced during his 26 years at the Tourist Department (1935–1961), Alsop and Feeney believe King's art – both paintings and posters – played a large role in New Zealand's early success as a tourist destination. Alongside his commercial work King was an active painter of landscapes and other scenes for all his life.

Of particular interest to Dunedin is the 10m mural depicting New Zealand's evolution, which King painted for the 1925–1926 New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition held in the city. This painting survives only in a pencil sketch used prominently in a pictorial record of the Exhibition.

