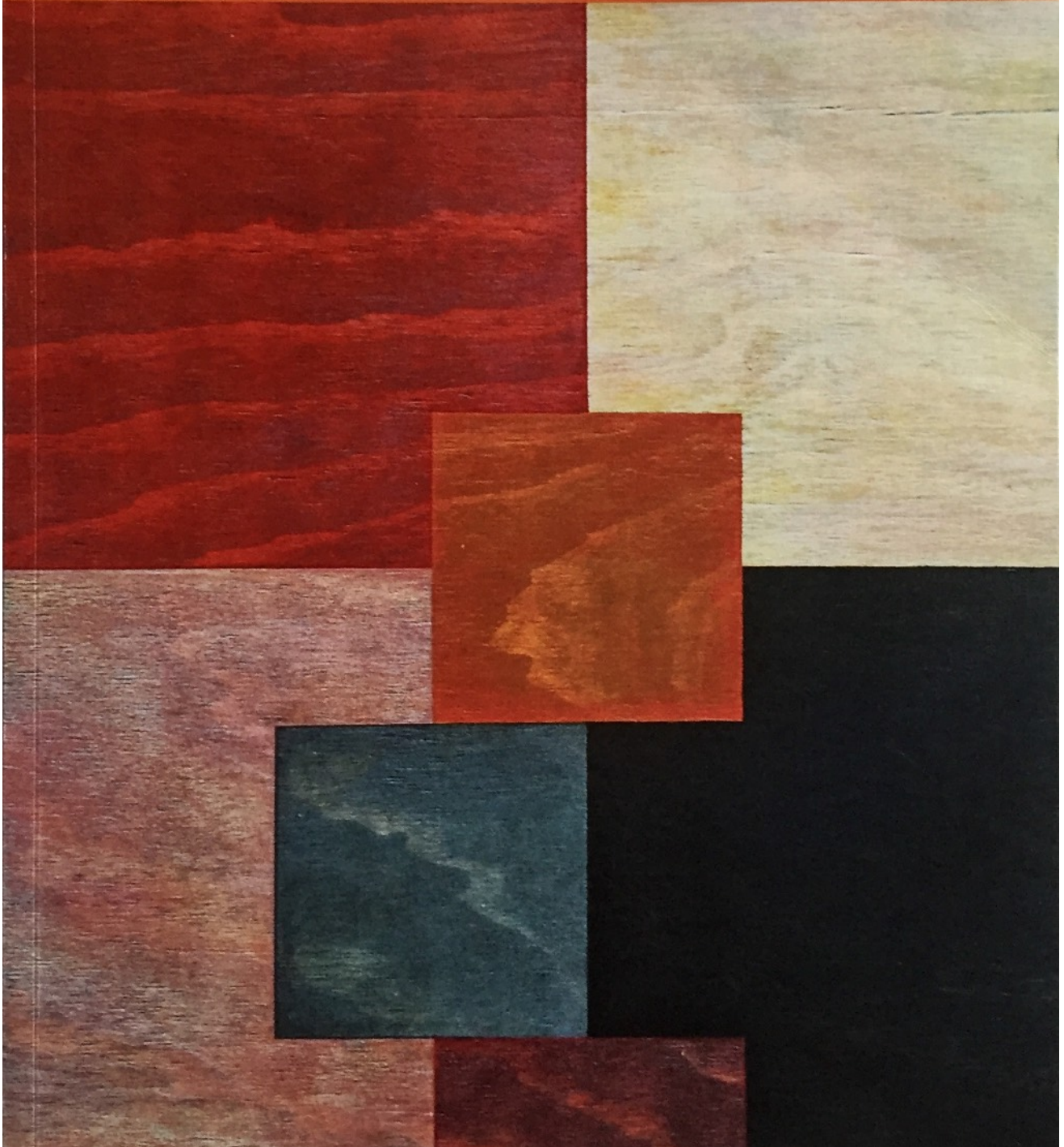


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## **ROY GOOD: Pioneer of abstraction in New Zealand**

Linda Tyler

Canterbury-born Roy Good grew up with the changes in art that came with the dissemination of the ideas of the Bauhaus designers who fled Europe during World War II. Rather than perpetuate a nationalist canon by producing representational landscapes celebrating the dairying regions, his gaze was firmly fixed on international styles. His distinctive pictorial language of geometric abstraction is based on the use of simple geometric forms placed in non-illusionistic space and combined into nonobjective composition. With a practice stretching over seven decades, he has maintained his fidelity to pure abstraction, freely experimenting with different materials and exploring the spatial relationships between various compositional parts. His rich and engaging work arises from his abiding interest in the the most basic elements of art: the endless possibilities of form, line and colour. By deploying primary, secondary and tertiary colours within shapes controlled by straight and circular lines he creates a purely pictorial reality built of elemental geometric forms which is infinite in its variety.

Taught at Cashmere High School by Quentin MacFarlane (1935-2019) (who was only ten years his senior) Good was encouraged to pursue university study in the fine arts. In 1963 when he enrolled at the School of Fine Arts, Canterbury University, his teachers included the European émigré Rudi Gopas as well as the uncompromising modernist sculptor Tom Taylor. Eschewing Gopas's enthusiasm for the jagged lines and tortured shapes of German Expressionism which had been influential in Bauhaus teaching in the Weimar period, Good became interested in the Dessau period of the school (1926-31), when it was flourishing as a training ground for designers before it was shut down by the Nazis. The Dessau Bauhaus formulated a rational, functional design aesthetic that took a form follows function, less is more approach, which could be easily applied to manufactured articles, bringing good design to the masses. There was to be no artistic hierarchy since all the arts were equally valued.

With his Diploma of Fine Arts completed in 1965, Good moved to Auckland the following year to train as an art teacher. He arrived in the city in 1966, just as the abstract painter Gordon Walters (1919-1995) had his first exhibition since 1949 at Kees and Tine Hos's New Vision Gallery in His Majesty's Arcade just off Queen Street. Walters' angular and geometric paintings had a profound impact on Good, as did the attitudes to design and art of gallery director Kees Hos (1916-2015). Hos had been a teacher at the Rotterdam Academy of Art, and chose to name his gallery after the 1930 book written by the Hungarian Bauhausler László Moholy-Nagy (1895-1946) as a declaration of his affinity with Bauhaus ideas of an equivalence between the fine arts, design and craft.



Uniquely amongst his contemporaries, Good became a practicing designer and an artist. Rather than finish his teacher training, Good began to work in the new medium of television, creating sets and graphics typical of the psychedelic sixties for iconic programmes such as *C'mon* and *Top Half*. Skilled at capturing the zeitgeist in his work, by 1982, he had been appointed head of design for TVNZ. By comparison, his progression as an exhibiting artist was more peripatetic. He made his debut in a joint exhibition with another former student from Canterbury University (and fellow abstractionist), John Shotton Parker (1944-2017) at the Vulcan Gallery in 1968. His first solo show featured symmetrical geometrical paintings with an emblem at their centre, and was at Barry Lett Galleries in 1970, where he continued to exhibit until 1974.



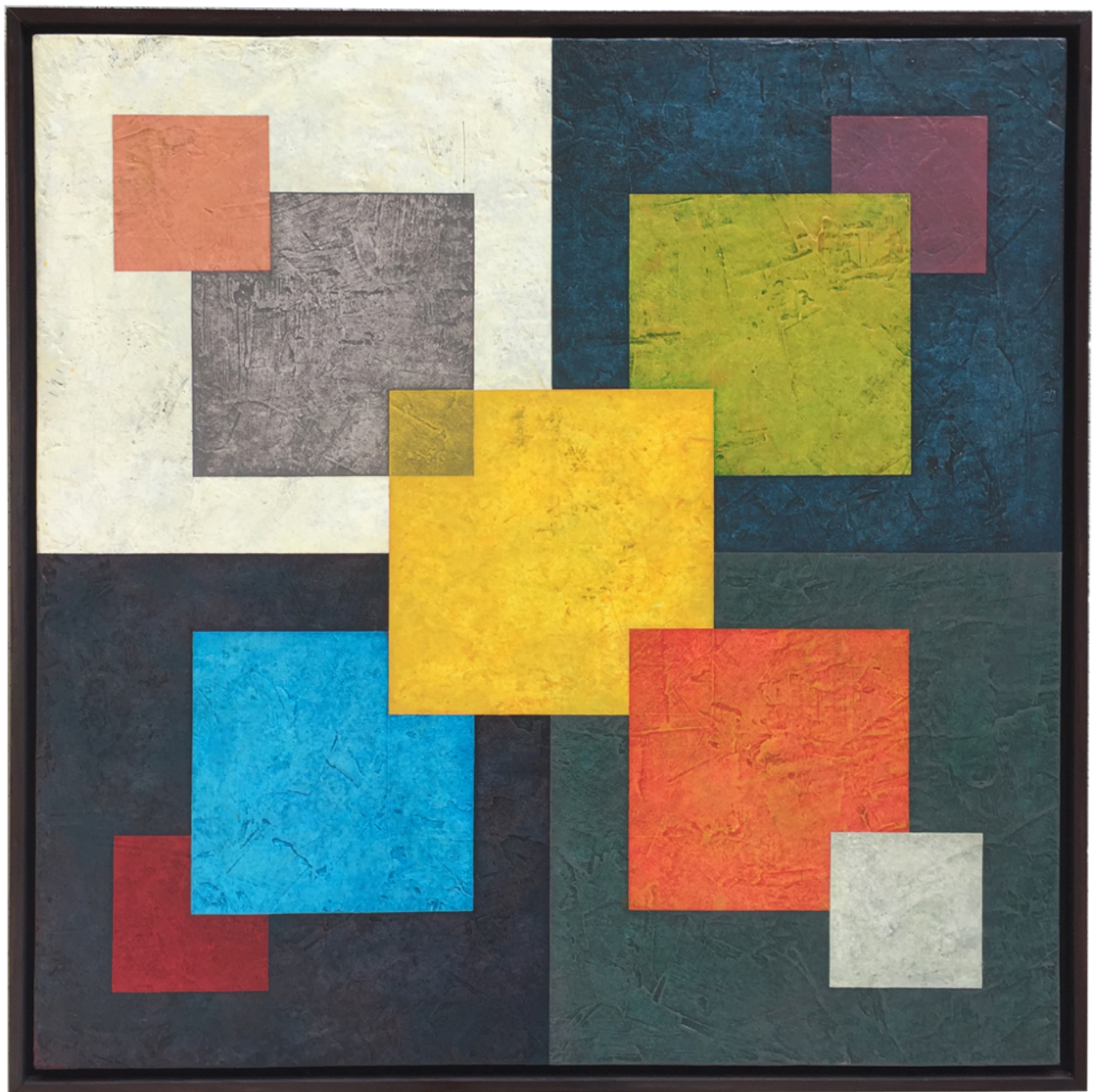
Once his distinctive shaped canvases began to be exhibited at Petar Vuletic's uncompromisingly abstractionist Petar/James Gallery in Shortland Street, he had found his tribe.

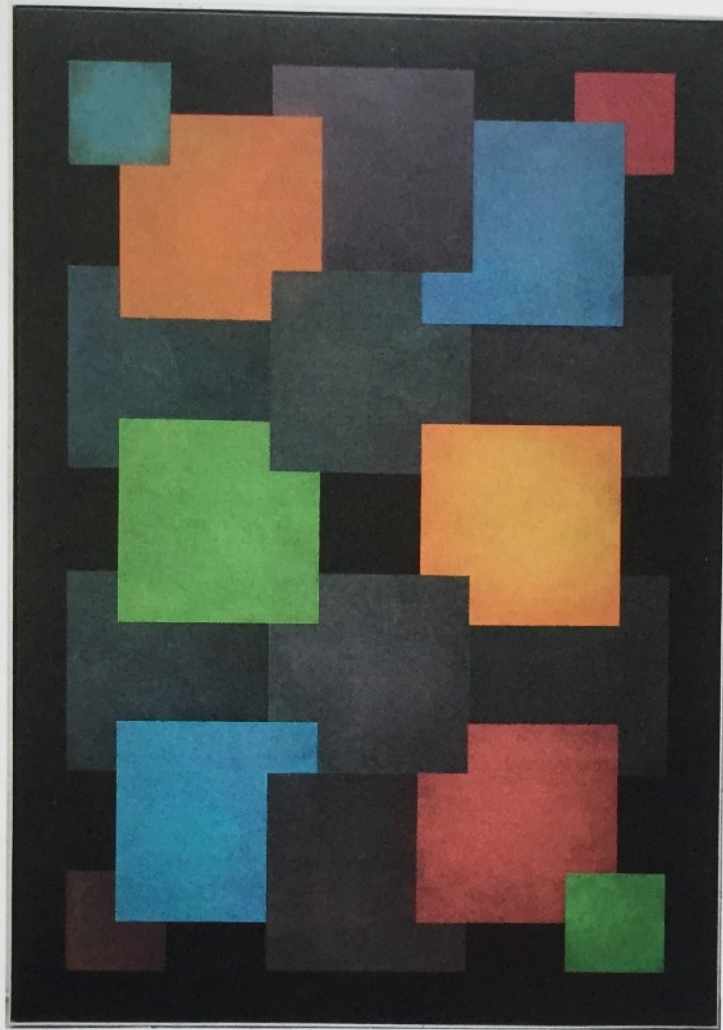
He joined a stellar roster of artists: Ron Left, Geoff Thornley, Milan Mrkusich, Stephen Bambury, Phillip O'Sullivan, Alan Wright, Richard Killeen, Gordon Walters and Ian Scott before setting up an artist-run space, Gallery DATA. However, these galleries were relatively short-lived, and although he had his work included in the exhibition which opened Denis Cohn Gallery, and displayed painted wooden relief works at New Vision, once gallerist Trish Clark selected his work for her Artis Gallery in 1984, he settled into regular exhibitions there alongside other senior abstract painters, until his shift to Scott Lawrie Gallery in 2020.

This steady presence in the Auckland art world was sustained alongside his design career, as his first retrospective, *In Good Form* held at Lopdell House Gallery in 2007 and curated by Ed Hanfling, noted in commemorating his fortieth year of exhibiting. More recently, Te Uru: Waitakere Contemporary Gallery presented *Parallel Universe* in 2018. This traced the fascinating trajectory of his career as a designer alongside his painting, with an essay in the catalogue by Andrew Paul Wood titled "The Day Job" documenting Good's considerable contribution to our everyday visual landscape with such iconic logos as the kotuku on the red disc (for the sesquicentennial commemoration in 1990) and the red eye ringed with encircling koru motifs (for South Pacific Television).

This exhibition established how his design work had fed his painting practice and vice-versa, with the artist remarking in an email to Wood, "Like all good Bauhauspractitioners, for me the two fields were joined in a seamless link reinforcing the modernist approach I took."

With works in major public art gallery collections such as Christchurch Art Gallery, as well as the collections of the universities of Auckland and Canterbury and the prestigious Fletcher Trust Collection, Roy Good is a highly respected and acclaimed practitioner whose adherence to the tenets of modernism has never wavered. Now in his eighth decade, he continues to paint art works which are expressive, unique and thought provoking. If modern painting can be understood as half way between algebra and music as the French writer Gustave Flaubert prophesied in 1852, Good has found harmony in an almost musical perception of reality, highlighted by his delight in the application of his skills to the rendering of shapes, colours and light.





Front cover: **Roy Good** *Squares Ascend No.1* (detail) (2021), acrylic on canvas, 1800H x 1350mm

Back cover: **Roy Good** *Squares Interlock* (2022), acrylic and varnish on canvas, 1800H x 1275mm

Images are courtesy of Scott Lawrie Gallery, Auckland.

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