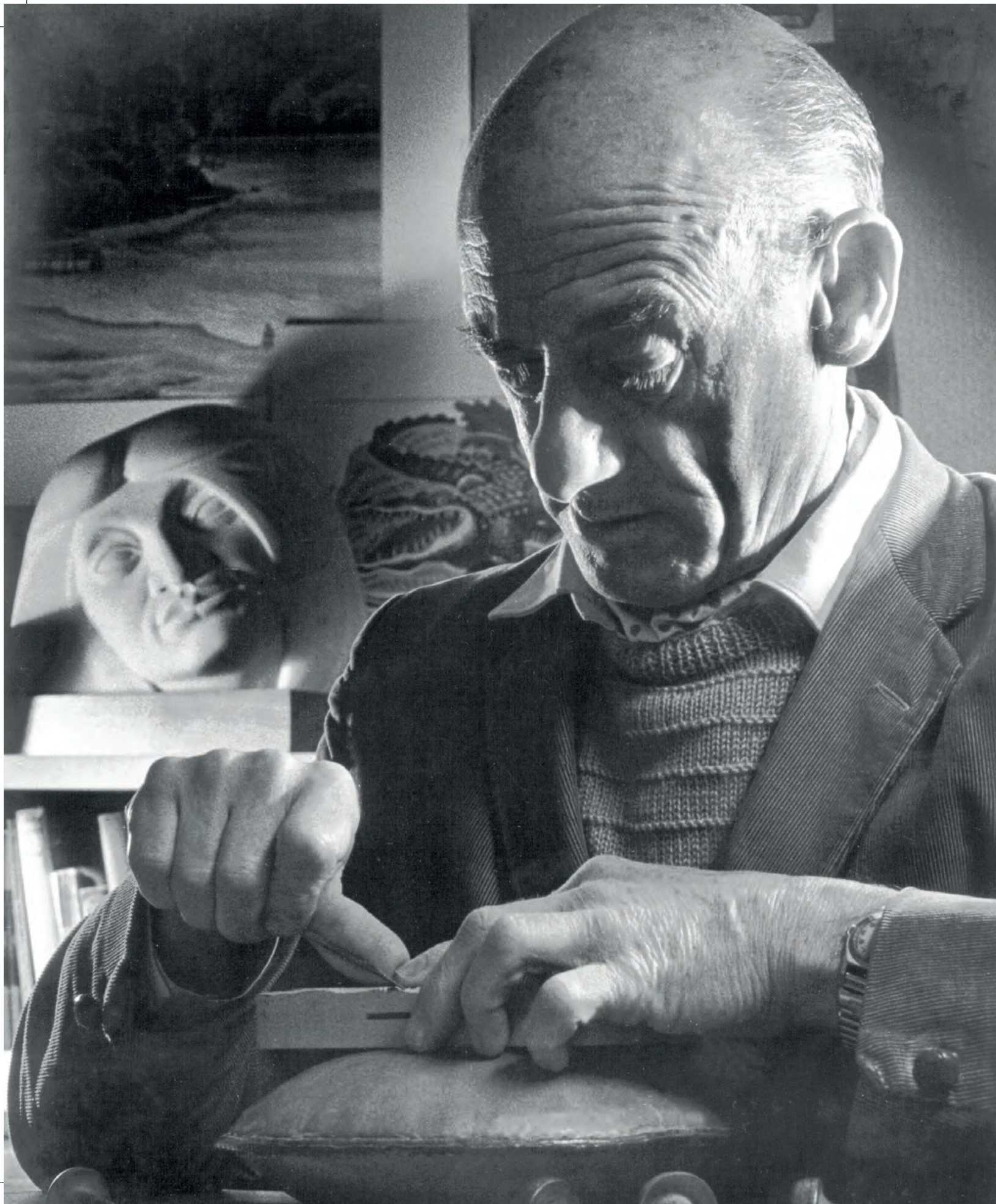


WANTED



For the New Zealand artists
whose public works have been neglected



WANTED

THE SEARCH FOR THE
MODERNIST MURALS OF
E. MERVYN TAYLOR

Edited by
Bronwyn Holloway-Smith



FOUND

Sand-blasted glass window,
Ōtaki War Memorial Hall.
After being vandalised, the broken
window was remade in 2006–2007.

[PAGE TWO]

Paikea and the whale

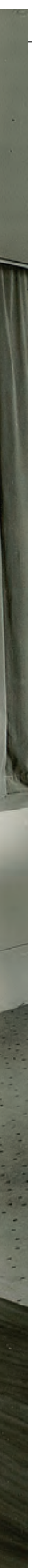
Taylor working on his last,
unfinished, engraving, 1964.



MISSING

Incised tōtara panel, boardroom,
New Zealand Meat Producers Board,
Massey House, Wellington, 1958.

The image of the missing carved panel
has been digitally inserted into this
photograph, which was taken in 1958
when the room was close to completion.





FOUND

Sand-blasted glass window,
Khandallah Presbyterian Church.
After being broken, the lower-centre
pane was remade in 2012.









FOUND

Sand-blasted glass window,
New Plymouth War Memorial Hall,
Museum and Library (now Puke
Ariki), photographed not long
after its installation in 1960.









FOUND

Ceramic tile mural, Commonwealth Pacific Cable Terminal, Northcote, Auckland, photographed in 1962. This mural was subsequently removed from its original location.

[PREVIOUS PAGES]

FOUND

Painted wall partition, Wairoa Centennial Library, photographed not long after its installation in 1961.





HIDDEN

Painting on concrete wall,
New Zealand Soil Bureau,
Taita, Lower Hutt, photographed
in 1962. This mural has been
painted over.

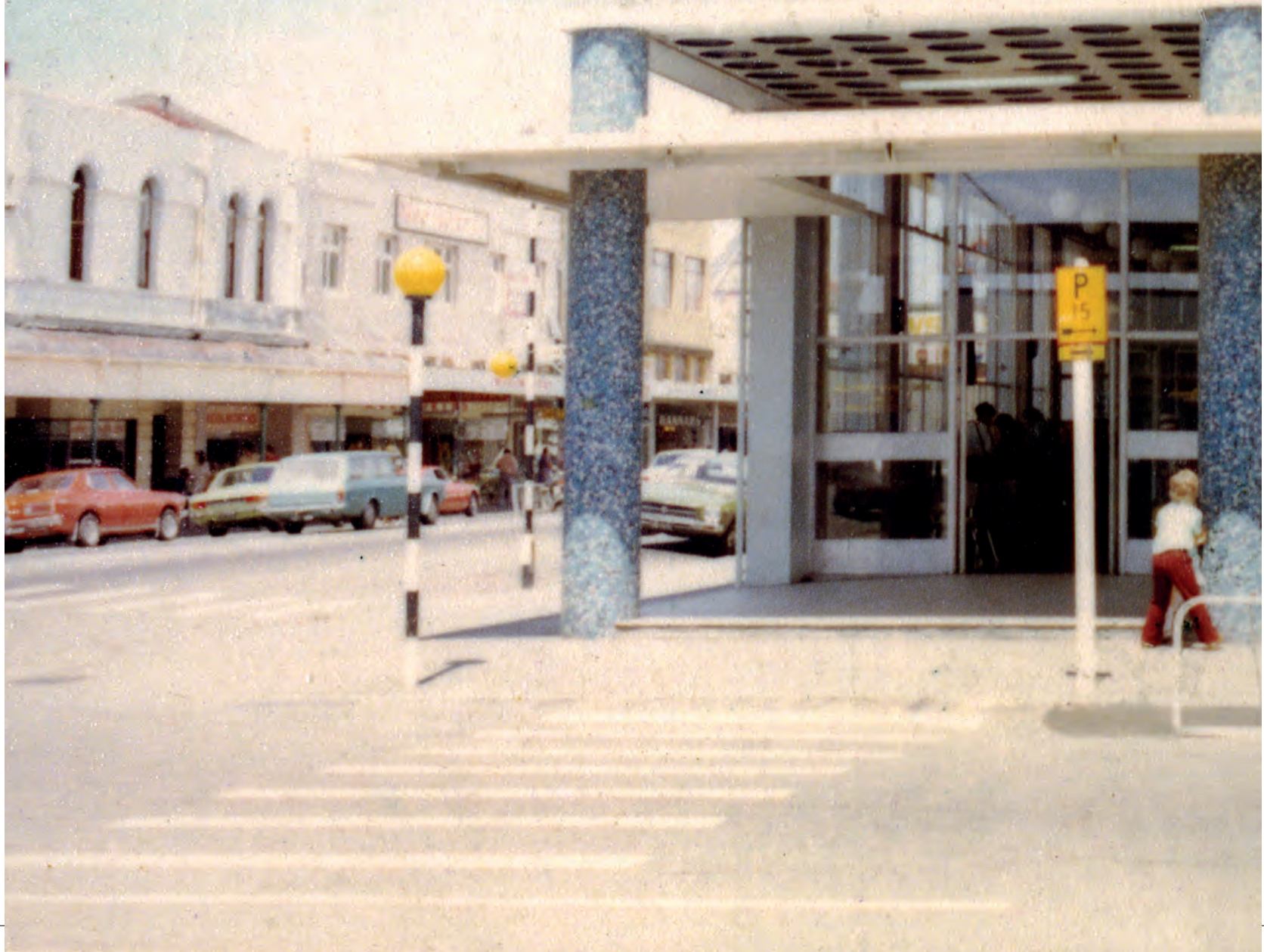
[FOLLOWING PAGES]

HIDDEN

Ceramic tile mural, Masterton
Post Office, photographed in
1962. This mural is now behind
a wall. Despite repeated
approaches, access to remove
the wall and photograph the
mural was denied.



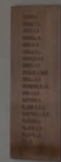
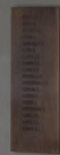
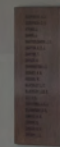
CHIEF POST OFFICE







IN MEMORY OF THOSE WHO PAID THE





LOST

Wall painting, National Mutual Life Assurance building, Wellington, photographed in 1963. This mural is presumed destroyed.

[PREVIOUS PAGES]

FOUND

Ceramic tile mural, Masterton War Memorial Stadium Hall of Memories.

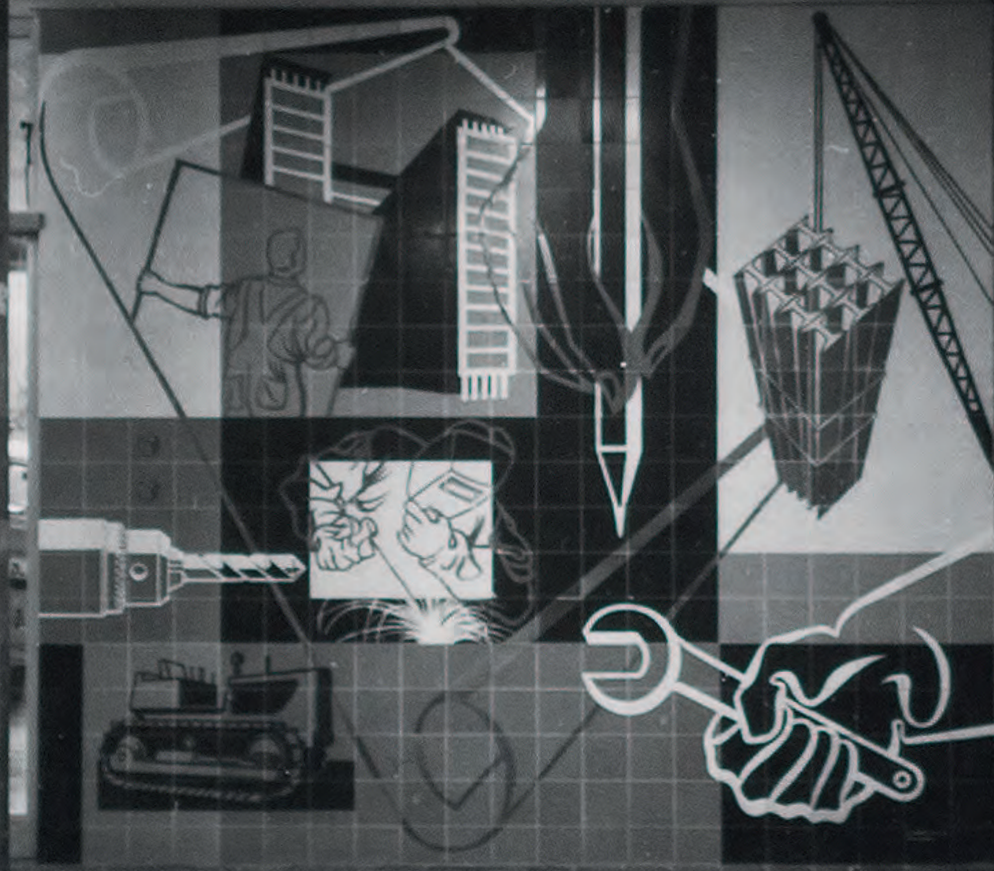








7-7-64



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MISSING

Ceramic tile mural, Cable Price
Downer House, Wellington,
photographed in 1964.

[PREVIOUS PAGES]

FOUND

Carved kauri panel, Broadcasting
House, Wellington, photographed
in 1963.

[FOLLOWING PAGES]

Still life with *Te Tiriti*

O Waitangi

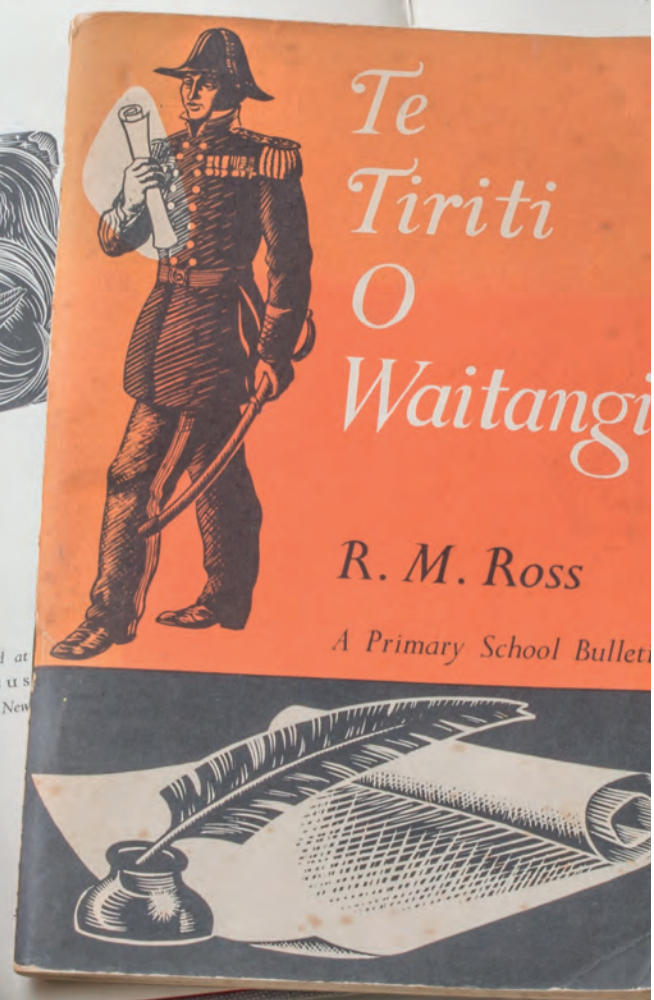
The Taylor studio, Karori, 2017.



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ERVYN TAYLOR
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Printed at
THE PEGASUS
Christchurch New



TO
EDELWEISS, JANE AND TERENCE
AND OTHERS WHO HAVE ENCOURAGED
THE ART OF WOOD ENGRAVING

E. Mervyn Taylor 1957

gi
Bulletin



MURAL LOCATIONS

AUCKLAND

Commonwealth Pacific
Cable Terminal (1962)

NEW PLYMOUTH

War Memorial Hall,
Museum & Library (1960)

WAIROA

Centennial Library (1961)

ŌTAKI

War Memorial Hall (1956)

MASTERTON

Post Office (1962)
War Memorial Stadium Hall of Memories (1963/66)

LOWER HUTT

New Zealand Soil Bureau, Taita (1962)

WELLINGTON

Massey House (1958)
Khandallah Presbyterian Church (1959)
National Mutual Life Assurance building (1963)
Broadcasting House (1963)
Cable Price Downer House (1964)

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CLAIRE ROBINSON
FOREWORD

Like all good stories, this one begins with the discovery of something long neglected, in an old cardboard box: the tiles from a mural by E. Mervyn Taylor — *Te Ika-a-Maui* — which when put back together tell the story of Māui fishing up the North Island. It was commissioned by the New Zealand Government to mark the 1962 completion of the Tasman leg of the Commonwealth Pacific Cable — a huge underwater telephone cable system that connected New Zealand to its Commonwealth allies in the aftermath of World War II. As reported in a 1962 newspaper article about the mural, the work '[dominated] the entrance hall of the New Zealand terminal building ... When asked if he had any special reason for selecting this particular myth for the cable, Mr Taylor explained that the myth of fishing up a piece of land was a poetical Polynesian way of describing the discovery of a new island. There was an analogy, he thought, between the "fishing up" of New Zealand by Māui and its modern counterpart where the new cable again draws New Zealand out of the Pacific into the telephone systems of the world.'

The mural, stored in its cardboard boxes, was discovered as a result of PhD research that Massey University's College of Creative Arts staff member Bronwyn Holloway-Smith was doing into the history of the Southern Cross Cable — New Zealand's major present-day internet connection to the rest of the world.

The analogy is fitting for this book, itself a journey of discovery, not simply of the public works of E. Mervyn Taylor, but also of the records of the making of the works. Sketches, gouaches and architect's plans are usually invisible to an audience that only sees the end product mounted on a building wall. But for an artist or designer the finished piece of work is only one part of the creative process. This book uncovers the normally unseen, but equally important, side of that process. We hope E. Mervyn Taylor doesn't mind this sort of exposure being given to the inner workings of his highly creative mind.

This book is important, too, for providing a fresh perspective on New Zealand history as told through a visual lens. As such, it is part of a wider project under way at Massey University to privilege the visual as a primary object of historical focus. Conventionally visual images are included as illustrations alongside text-based historical accounts. To consider them as an appendage to a piece of writing misses the rich perspectives that can be revealed through a study of the visual narrative and the techniques, colours, composition, technology and typography that go into forming that narrative. Visual images have their own histories to reveal. This is especially so when it comes to understanding the concept of nationhood — a largely visual construction — as E. Mervyn Taylor's works reveal.

The E. Mervyn Taylor Mural Search and Recovery Project was launched by Massey University in 2016 as a legacy project to celebrate 130 years since the establishment of New Zealand's first School of Design, now part of the College of Creative Arts. E. Mervyn Taylor is an alumnus of the school and was posthumously inducted into the Massey University College of Creative Arts Hall of Fame for his significant contribution to the emergence of a unique New Zealand language in art and design. Rooted in this project, also, is a desire to highlight the need for better protection and promotion of New Zealand's public art heritage. Since 2016, the project has become a catalyst, focusing minds in the tertiary, government, and arts and culture sectors on the broader significance of the many other important murals and works of art that have been funded by taxpayers and ratepayers and sited in public buildings and spaces. There is currently no publicly funded or administered initiative protecting and promoting the value of these works. We hope that will change sometime soon!

All those who have contributed to this book have done so out of a genuine belief in the importance of public art. But no one deserves more credit than Bronwyn Holloway-Smith. Her dedication and tenacity as an artist and a researcher are nothing short of extraordinary. E kore tana pūweru e mākū i te pata ua! A shower of rain cannot wet her garment; she's a woman above average, not easily upset by problems.

Professor Claire Robinson

Pro Vice-Chancellor College of Creative Arts
Massey University



SARAH TAYLOR

PREFACE

I never met Mervyn, my grandfather — he died before I was born — but I grew up with his art and his influence all around me. Best known for his intricate and beautiful wood engravings, he was also an accomplished illustrator, painter, designer, printmaker, sculptor and muralist. He was a man ahead of his time — willing to turn his hand to new mediums and explore indigenous subjects at a time when that was not the done thing. He was passionate about the New Zealand landscape, flora, fauna and te ao Māori.

I remember lying in bed at my grandmother Teddy's house, staring for hours at a painting called *Early Settlers*, the template for the subsequent mural for the Masterton Post Office. It was a bit scary waking to see the figures and the fire, alongside a bronze bust of Mervyn's head, in the shadows of the night. Another prototype, *Te Ika-a-Maui* for the Commonwealth Pacific Cable mural, features large in my memory as it hung above the TV in Teddy's living room. I clearly remember the moment, still a young kid, when I suddenly made out the shape of the North Island, with Mount Ruapehu and Mount Ngāuruhoe emerging from the swirling waters.

Mervyn's talents were recognised while he was alive, but it was not easy to be a professional artist in the post-war years with a young family to support. By all accounts, Mervyn was a modest and unassuming man. He was shy, but loved to have a laugh. And despite his prolific output, he always made time for his family — Teddy and their kids, Terence (my dad) and Jane. Mervyn died in 1964; he was only 57.

I met Bronwyn Holloway-Smith in 2014 after she rediscovered the *Te Ika-a-Maui* mural, when she was carefully restoring it tile by tile. Bronwyn and I talked a lot about Mervyn and his work. I casually mentioned that one day it would be great to find out what had happened to Mervyn's murals all around the country and Bronwyn agreed. A spark was lit. A few months later, Bronwyn approached the College of Creative Arts at Massey University with a proposal to fund a project to do exactly that. The wonderful Claire Robinson, Pro Vice-Chancellor of the college, was fully supportive and the E. Mervyn Taylor Mural Search and Recovery Project was launched.

The project has been full of mystery, intrigue and heartbreak. I shed a few quiet tears when I heard that the mural at the former Soil Bureau building in Taita was, in all likelihood, still there under layers of paint, but irrecoverable. The disappearance of the mural from the Wairoa Library is a mystery that will hopefully one day be solved.

The project could not have achieved what it has without Bronwyn's drive and enthusiasm. This book is a wonderful testament to her and to the Massey University College of Creative Arts. My family and I would like to say a heartfelt thank you to everyone involved. Mervyn would have been chuffed.

A father and grandfather
Mervyn Taylor with his
children Jane and Terence
in 1948.