

Celebrating New Zealand's first female art dealer

As part of the 2008 New Zealand International Arts Festival the **Museum of Wellington** is set to celebrate New Zealand's first female art dealer with a new exhibition, **The Gallery of Helen Hitchings – from fretful sleeper to art world giant**.

In a stunning re-creation of Helen's Hitchings' original gallery, which opened in Wellington early 1949, the Museum will bring to life one of the most provocative and ultimately successful private dealer galleries in New Zealand.

Visitors to **The Gallery of Helen Hitchings** will view into the gallery where Hitchings promoted interior decoration in a scaled-down original context. Helen Hitchings was meticulous in her approach to presenting art and her clean modernist style will be faithfully replicated.

Art works on display will include paintings by **Colin McCahon, Toss Woollaston & Rita Angus**, ceramics by **Len Castle** and furniture by architect **Ernst Plischke**. These artists are now household names and give testament to the fine aesthetic and bold artistic flair of Helen Hitchings.

Director of the **Museum of Wellington**, Brett Mason notes, "Helen Hitchings set out to expand the thinking of an insular New Zealand society. The Museum is attempting in its own way to bring to today's audience just how important a young woman of 28 years establishing a gallery in Wellington was to New Zealand's cultural and social development".

Helen Hitchings' pioneering style revolutionised art dealing in New Zealand. Not only was she one of the first dealers to present art in a contemporary studio-style space, she also combined locally-made modernist fine art with textiles, craft and furniture. Hitchings regarded all forms of art as sources for interior decorating and despaired at the paucity of well-designed household items available in New Zealand at the time. Hers was a new way of thinking, as for many New Zealanders then 'art' lived in art society galleries - not in people's homes.

Hitchings decided to show original New Zealand works by individual artists rather than the mass produced objects so commonly available. But more than that, the gallery held contemporary music concerts and poetry readings that were live broadcast over the radio.

The Gallery of Helen Hitchings – from fretful sleeper to art world giant is curated by Jane Vial, and designed by David Waller. The exhibition celebrates one of our artistic pioneers and presents many of New Zealand's most famous artists' work as they were first exhibited.

For further information please contact publicist, Melanie Hamilton. Ph 496 1948, email melanie.hamilton@wmt.org.nz

The Gallery of Helen Hitchings – from fretful sleeper to art world giant
Museum of Wellington, Opens 20 February 2008

Museum of Wellington, open daily 10am to 5pm, FREE ENTRY www.museumofwellington.co.nz