

# Trevor Bayliss, F.M.A.N.Z. 1913- 2009

## MUSEUM MAN PAR EXCELLENCE

Trevor Bayliss was first Curator of Applied Arts at Auckland War Memorial Museum from 1965 to 1978. During these years he developed a European and Asian based applied arts collection that came to be regarded as second only to that at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Under his curatorship and subsequent Assistant Directorship, he brought professionalism, energy, wit and above all a passion for imparting knowledge.

## UNEXPECTED TRAJECTORY

Born in Feilding, he was educated in Hawkes Bay after which he taught, working in schools on the east coast. During World War II he served as an instructor for the Royal New Zealand Airforce and, in 1941, married Marjorie who became his lifelong companion.

It was in 1957 that Trevor Bayliss entered the museum profession appointed to the role of Extension Service Officer at Auckland Museum. The role of providing travelling displays and museum information to the wider public suited him immensely. It laid the foundations for his appointment of Curator of Applied Art in 1965. With collections including the Mackelvie Trust of applied art that were transferred from the Ethnology Department, Trevor Bayliss was able to augment them with acquisitions from 1968, using the Disney Art Trust funds. British loan collections were able to be added after a trip to Europe and Trevor Bayliss secured works from the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Guildhall and London Museums. He also attracted lenders including Peter Rule for Korean ceramics and donors like James Fenton for furniture, glass, carpets, clocks and pewter.

## SHARING THE KNOWLEDGE

Education was very important to him. The collections that he gathered and the displays that he installed reflected his deep understanding of cultural influences in style and technique. Catalogue guides were published of the museum displays and objects discussed in the *New Zealand Potter* and *Art New Zealand*.

**Justine Olsen** acknowledges the many debts owed by the New Zealand museum community to the pioneering contributions of Trevor Bayliss in the applied arts, museum display and museum management.

Exhibition space and design was also highly regarded by Trevor Bayliss, establishing the Hall of Asian Art in 1969, Disney Hall of Furniture in 1972 and the Hall of the Pacific in 1977. The need for independent exhibition space was identified and the Special Exhibitions Hall was developed for many external exhibitions including those for the Auckland Studio Potters Society and Fletcher Challenge Ceramics Awards. Today, appropriately, the space houses the museum's exhibition *Landmarks: international design and decorative arts*.

### A PASSION FOR POTTERY

Supporting the studio pottery movement, Trevor Bayliss facilitated visits within Auckland for visiting international potters including Bernard Leach and Takeichi Kawai. And trips to Japan, China and Korea reinforced cultural exchanges. As a mentor to a number of Auckland potters, he encouraged Auckland War Memorial Museum to be a centre for display, learning and activities. Many potters remember the generous access that he provided for handling and viewing work. Trevor Bayliss's own pottery made with his wife Marjorie, was typically created according to Leach theory, using local clay and a hand built kiln. His ceramics were illustrated in the seminal book *Craft New Zealand: the art of the craftsman* by Doreen Blumhardt and Brian Brake published in 1981.

### PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION

Trevor Bayliss was appointed Assistant Director in 1971 and, with the establishment of an independent display department, he accepted additional responsibilities as Curator of Display in 1972. His retirement in 1978 provided him with time to continue his abiding passion for ceramics and extend his interests into other areas including rare books, private printing presses and paper making.

He was made a Fellow of the Museums Association of New Zealand in 1977 and an Associate Emeritus of the Auckland War Memorial Museum in 1999.

Bayliss is survived by his wife Marjorie.



Figure 1: Trevor Bayliss, Assistant Director and Curator of Applied Arts at Auckland Museum, c. mid 1970s. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: AUCKLAND WAR MEMORIAL MUSEUM. NEGATIVE NO. C21175.

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### REFERENCES

Auckland War Memorial Museum. (1999). Biography for Trevor's honour: Associate Emeritus of the Auckland War Memorial Museum. Auckland: Author.