

Ian Scott

b.1945

Diploma of Fine Arts (Hons): Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland

Ian Scott began painting landscapes at age 15 and in 1965 won the junior section of the Kelliher Prize, then a prestigious competition for traditional landscape painting. Scott is an artist of the generation who came after Colin McCahon. In this work, *Homage To Morris Louis*, Scott brings together a number of different painting styles.

There is landscape, but in a Modernist style derived from McCahon's cubist letter forms of the 1950s. (McCahon taught Scott at Elam School of Fine Art in Auckland. Note the references to McCahon's *Waterfall* paintings in Scott's landscape.) There is the figure of the young woman who has levitated from the pages of a fashion mag, painted in the manner of British Pop artists such as Peter Blake. The title suggests there is still another painting style present in this image.

Morris Louis was an important American painter who took Jackson Pollock's drip technique as a pointer to explore the possibilities of 'spilling' and 'pouring' paint, creating transparent watercolour-like effects on a very large scale. In a particularly important series, Louis poured long parallel rivulets of pure colour on to the canvas. These are known as his 'stripe' paintings. Look at the model's dress: it refers to these paintings. Scott also makes playful reference to the letters in Morris Louis's name, incorporating them into the contours of the landscape. And the strange rectangular cloud on the far left of the painting recalls the way Louis tilted his canvases to create his poured stripes. It also looks a little like a head stone. Morris Louis died in 1962.

When Scott painted his homage in 1969 the world had changed dramatically from the grim post-war years of the 1950s. Youth culture and counterculture had become a rebellious and colourful force. The Woodstock festival took place that year. The contraceptive pill had brought sexual liberation. There was a sharp increase in the use of psychedelic drugs. Concern for ecology was widespread. As well as these convulsions in the wider culture, the 1960s saw radical changes in art.

In *Homage To Morris Louis* the unexpected juxtaposition of magazine imagery with art historical in-jokes suggests a new relationship between popular culture and high art. It was a relationship that got a kick-start from Pop art. Pop challenged head-on the notion that high art was somehow closed off from popular culture, consumerism or the mass media. Think of Andy Warhol's pictures of soup cans and screen prints taken from newspaper photographs. Think of Roy Lichtenstein's comic book-derived paintings. And think of Peter Blake's album cover for the Beatles' *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. In terms of the New Zealand scene, Ian Scott's Pop works (1968–1970) represent a similar cultural turning point.

Andrew Paul Wood

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Peter Blake

Roy Lichtenstein

Morris Louis

Colin McCahon

Jackson Pollock

Andy Warhol

