

# From the art collection

Marti Friedlander is one of New Zealand's most celebrated photographers.

She migrated to Auckland from London in 1958, after an extraordinary nine-month honeymoon on a Lambretta scooter with her kiwi husband, Gerrard. In 1964 she became a full-time photographer, documenting New Zealand's fledgling wine industry for Dick Scott's *Wine Review*, no doubt finding a strong connection with the European migrant communities that were so influential in developing these businesses. Travelling the country, she brought an inquisitive eye to capturing the everyday activities of a fast-changing nation, and took a particular interest in meeting Maori, leading to her work with Michael King on his book *Moko: the art of Maori tattooing* (1972).

Friedlander is probably best-known for her portraits, and as a recent (and young) arrival from bustling London, she was always on the look-out for cultural activity. The result is a roll-call of New Zealand artists and writers, including Rita Angus, Ralph Hotere, Colin McCahon, Charles Brasch, Karl Stead, Louise Henderson and many more, including a significant group commissioned for Jim and Mary Barr's book *Contemporary New Zealand Painters: Volume 1 A-M* (1980, there was never a second volume, although Robin White would have been a likely inclusion).

This photograph captures painter White in her studio at Portobello where she lived from 1972 to 1980. In the background of the photograph is another portrait: one of four major paintings White produced of poet Sam Hunt, including one held by The University of Auckland Art Collection. White met Hunt at the University Arts Festival in 1968 while she was

finishing teacher training at Epsom, having already completed a diploma at Elam. She found work at Mana College in Porirua and Hunt found her a tiny cottage on Paremata Harbour near his own place. White is in bare feet, Hunt is in gumboots and singlet, there is a Chef Jellymeat can to clean brushes in and the painting's shadows say mid-morning so the Portobello Pub is presumably not yet open – it is a quintessentially vernacular scene that could have just as easily been described by the poet as by the painter (or the photographer).

In 1999, Friedlander was made a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit for Services to Photography, and received an Icon Award from the Arts Foundation in 2011. In 2009 she was the subject of the substantial book *Marti Friedlander: Looking Closely*, written by Art History Professor, Leonard Bell, and published by Auckland University Press, featuring more than 200 of her photographs and accompanied by an exhibition at the Gus Fisher Gallery. Since 2007 she has sponsored the Arts Foundation's Photographic Award, and in October this year her autobiography, *Self-Portrait*, written with oral



historian Dr Hugo Manson, will be published by Auckland University Press.

Dame Robin White was made a Distinguished Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit in 2003, and in 2012 was celebrated by The University of Auckland as a Distinguished Alumna.

**Andrew Clifford**

Marti Friedlander (b.1928), *Robin White, in her studio, before painting, 1977*

Vintage silver gelatin print, 233 x 233mm, The University of Auckland Art Collection