

From the collection

Artist Robin White and poet Sam Hunt met in 1968 when they were both 22 years old.

He was visiting Auckland to perform at the University Arts Festival and she had finished her Diploma of Fine Arts at Elam and was training to be a teacher. When Robin was offered a job at Mana College in Porirua in 1969, Sam found her a cottage to live in next to his at Bottle Creek on Paremata Harbour north of Wellington.

Their relationship was close, and the following October she painted this work, *Sam Hunt, Bottle Creek* 1970, the second of four major oil portraits she made of him in seven years. It is divided into three parts, like the triptych format traditionally used for altarpieces in churches.

Sam wrote several poems which refer to Robin, including "A White Gentian" (1971):

Remember Ruapehu,
that mountain, six months ago?
You sat in an alpine hut
Sketching scoria, red
rusted outcrops in the snow.

I climbed some southern peak
and made up the sort of song
men climbing mountains sing:
how, no longer your lover,
I knew it was over.

I thought I'd try out my song
when I returned that evening
as though there were nothing wrong.
Instead I brought a flower down
Smelling of the mountain.

As a poet, Sam is described by

one reviewer as "a kind of Kiwi Jack Kerouac, laconic and somewhat gauche, whose poems or roadsongs are direct and simple, surprised by their own powerful emotion". Sam is known for his ability to recite poetry from memory, and Robin White has portrayed him as the lone performer

whose lyrics are deliberately uncomplicated and colloquial like his appearance.

In May 1970 Robin first began making silkscreen prints using fabric dyes, styling landscapes and buildings into simplified forms with strong outlines. This printmaking

technique fed back into her painting. Sam appears in front of his home like an actor in front of a stage set, with foreground, midground and background carefully measured out into three stages of recession behind him.

Linda Tyler



Robin White (b.1946), *Sam Hunt, Bottle Creek* 1970 oil on canvas.