

‘Look here upon this picture’: Shakespeare in art at Te Papa

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the art holdings at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa) that relate to William Shakespeare and his writings, beginning with an engraving by Jan Harmensz. Muller of Cleopatra (c. 1592), which is treated as broadly ‘Shakespearean’ in its iconography. Later works include paintings by the neoclassicist George Dawe and prolific literary illustrator John Masey Wright, early modernist prints by Eric Ravilious and George Buday, as well as more recent counterparts by Tony Fomison and Sidney Nolan. Most detailed analysis is given to Raymond Boyce’s full-sized cartoons (1989) for the embroidered wall-hangings in Shakespeare’s Globe, London. It is argued that they are Te Papa’s most significant Shakespearean artworks and have a uniquely New Zealand component.

KEYWORDS: William Shakespeare, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Jan Harmensz. Muller, George Dawe, John Masey Wright, Eric Ravilious, George Buday, Tony Fomison, Sidney Nolan, Raymond Boyce, Wellington Shakespeare Society, Shakespeare’s Globe, embroidery.

As 2016 marks the 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare’s death, this is an appropriate moment to assess the art holdings related to the playwright in the collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa). For the most part, these do not match either the quality or the quantity of their counterparts in the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki or the Auckland War Memorial Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira. The former boasts three original works by surely the greatest Shakespearean artist, Henry Fuseli (1741–1825),¹ together with a remarkable large-scale copy by colonial secretary and poet Alfred Domett (1811–87) of Daniel Maclise’s *The Play Scene in Hamlet* (exhibited 1842; Tate Britain);² the latter owns an ‘infinite variety’ of decorative arts objects, including an Arts and Crafts marital bed, a set of decorative tiles depicting the ‘seven ages of man’ and, perhaps most memorably, a vivid cast of marionettes (1937) for *The Tempest* by New Zealand puppeteer Arnold Goodwin (1890–1978).³

No Te Papa (or earlier, National Art Gallery) art curatorial staff member prior to the late Jonathan Mane-Wheoki possessed an obviously Shakespearean sensibility. A certain credibility gap is thus apparent between

Wellington’s involvement in hosting the phenomenally successful Shakespeare Globe Centre of New Zealand University of Otago Sheilah Winn Shakespeare Festival and any comparable role played by the national museum. In 2016, *Shakespeare in His Time*, held at the Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Central Library, was the sole national exhibition of its kind.⁴ Small but cultured and exemplary, it showcased the library’s 1623 First Folio edition (the only copy in New Zealand) and related literary material. A proposal for a considerably more ambitious Te Papa exhibition, *Shakespeare: Avon to Aotearoa*, initiated by Mane-Wheoki and ‘championed’ by this author, was shelved, primarily because of the strategic priorities given to the museum renewal project. However, it is hoped that this article will both raise consciousness of Te Papa’s holdings and encourage their future display.

First, I will analyse the museum’s holdings, from Jan Harmensz. Muller to Sidney Nolan. I will then examine the jewel in the crown of the collection, Raymond Boyce’s set of cartoons for the wall-hangings at Shakespeare’s Globe in Bankside, London.



Fig. 1 *Cleopatra*, c. 1592, engraving, 186 x 231 mm. Artist Jan Harmensz. Muller (purchased 2015. Te Papa, 2015-0056-4).

Cleopatra and her angry asps

A recent Te Papa acquisition, *Cleopatra* (c. 1592), by the printmaker Jan Harmensz. Muller (1571–1628) (Fig. 1) is more ‘Shakespearean’ than the immediate historical facts would suggest. In his lifetime, Muller would not have attended or probably even heard of *Antony and Cleopatra*, owing to both his location (he worked in his native Netherlands, Prague and Italy) and the 150-year (or more) time lag before Shakespeare’s plays were widely performed in mainland Europe. Yet play and print have a shared source material, they are nearly contemporaneous in their production and, most tellingly, there is a synergy of dramatic mood and creativity on the part of artist and playwright alike.

Muller was one of the foremost Dutch engravers in an exciting age of print culture.⁵ Although he is best known for his reproductions of paintings by Flemish mannerist Bartholomeus Spranger, which were commissioned by the Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II, Muller produced some 20 recorded prints from his own designs. These include the Te Papa version of *Cleopatra*, which is, moreover, extremely rare. And while Muller was several years Shakespeare’s junior, the print pre-dates the latter’s play (first performed in 1607) by 10–15 years. The key text that influenced them both was Plutarch’s *Lives of the*

noble Greeks and Romans (c. second century AD), which was translated into French by Jacques Amyot in 1559 and frequently reprinted, and into English by Sir Thomas North in 1579.⁶

Visually, the print shows how Muller mastered and applied with immense virtuosity the engraving techniques of his likely teacher (and later almost certainly his rival), Hendrik Goltzius (1558–1617), based on swelling and diminishing lines. Jan Piet Filedt Kok, today’s leading Muller scholar, refers to his ‘dizzying array of sinuous hatching and broad swelling lines’ and his ‘robustly muscled nudes in fantastic postures’.⁷ Cleopatra certainly adopts the latter in a moment of supreme tension and tragedy as she presses one of the asps to her breast, while the other eagerly follows. The corollary between the moment of the image and Shakespeare’s text is near perfect, as Cleopatra cries:

Come, thou mortal wretch,
With thy sharp teeth this knot intricate
Of life at once untie; poor venomous fool,
Be angry, and dispatch.⁸

The often vain and histrionic heroine of Shakespeare’s play assumes a tragic grandeur in the moment of suicide, which is manifest in Muller’s engraving.



Fig. 2 *Imogen Found in the Cave of Belarius*, 1808, oil on canvas, 970 x 1230 mm. Artist George Dawe (gift of the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts, 1936. Te Papa, 1936-0012-84).

Imogen in the cave

Just over 200 years separate *Cleopatra* from *Imogen Found in the Cave of Belarius* (1808), by British painter George Dawe (Fig. 2). This gap can be put down to the long period before Shakespeare's plays were widely illustrated even in his native country. The earliest examples of illustrations were those made for Nicholas Rowe's six-volume edition of Shakespeare (1709), while one of the earliest paintings was William Hogarth's *Falstaff Examining His Recruits* (1730; private collection).⁹ The period between the years Hogarth (1697–1764) and Dawe (1781–1829) were active has been called the 'Shakespeare phenomenon', during which the playwright triumphed over his peers as the great national writer.¹⁰ In 1765, Samuel Johnson edited the plays with a new rigour and critical intelligence, only to be surpassed in the former by Edmund Malone in 1790. In 1769, David Garrick launched the Shakespeare Jubilee at Stratford-upon-Avon, belatedly commemorating the bicentenary of the writer's birth, the precursor of summer arts festivals in the form we recognise today.¹¹ By the end of the century, one play in every six performed in London was by Shakespeare; he was translated into French and German, becoming little short of Germany's national poet and bard.¹² A more immediate visual backcloth to



Fig. 3 *Imogen Found in the Cave of Belarius*, exhibited 1809, oil on canvas, 1005 x 1270 mm. Artist George Dawe (purchased 1965. Tate Britain, London, T00718).

Dawe's painting was John Boydell's immensely ambitious, if somewhat ill-fated, project to showcase Shakespeare in the form of paintings by England's leading national artists at the Boydell Shakespeare Gallery in London, together with the publication of a massive, three-volume illustrated folio edition of the plays (1791–1803).¹³

Stylistically, Dawe was poised between the ‘noble simplicity and calm grandeur’ of neoclassicism, evident in *Imogen Found in the Cave of Belarius*, and the more overtly emotional Romanticism (both in meteorological and psychological terms) of his Coleridge-influenced *Genevieve* (1812; Te Papa).¹⁴ The scene he depicts in the 1808 painting is unfamiliar to today’s audiences, although the play in which Imogen was the heroine, *Cymbeline*, was popular at the time, and her character was later much loved by sentimental Victorian audiences. Daughter of Cymbeline, Imogen is the faithful, brave wife of Posthumus, who at this stage of the play (Act IV, Scene ii) is deceived into believing that Imogen has been seduced by Iachimo, and is intent on her murder at an arranged rendezvous at Milford Haven. Tipped off about Posthumus’s dastardly plans, Imogen is on the run in the nearby Welsh mountains, disguised as a pageboy, Fidele (‘Faithful’). She finds refuge in the gloomy cave of Dawe’s setting. Exhausted and sick, she has taken a potion, and is being lovingly cradled by her new friend and fellow cave-dweller Arviragus, whom she does not yet know is – in a remarkable coincidence – her long-lost brother. Looking on is her other unknown brother, Guiderius, and their guardian, the wrongfully exiled Belarius, who had stolen the boys as infants from Cymbeline in revenge, only to bond with them.

It is to Dawe’s credit that he produces a credible, readable and, once the dramatic moment is identified, even touching episode within a madly convoluted plot.¹⁵ Ambitiously, he has attempted to cross artistic genres from relatively lowly illustration to elevated history painting, no doubt in his bid for recognition by the Royal Academy.¹⁶ The extreme depth of Imogen’s slumber – briefly mistaken for death – is convincingly conveyed. At the same time, it is precisely this intense earnestness and faithfulness to the largely unfamiliar text that acts as a barrier between the painting and today’s audiences – who don’t know and perhaps don’t even care what it is about. Another, slightly modified version of the same painting on a near-identical scale is in Tate Britain (Fig. 3). The composition is tightened, and Guiderius looks more directly and solicitously at Imogen, as does one of the hounds. This version, which was exhibited at the British Institution in 1809, has been subjected to a full academic finish, rendered with the characteristically mellowed tonalities and glazes of painting at the time.¹⁷ In turn, Te Papa’s version remained in the artist’s family, passing down

to Dawe’s nephew, later chief justice of New Zealand, Sir James Prendergast (1826–1921), and thence to the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts.

Tomfoolery and tragedy

A close contemporary of Dawe’s but far longer lived was John Masey Wright (1777–1866), who was highly prolific in his watercolour depictions and published illustrations of literary themes, particularly from Shakespeare and Irish writer Oliver Goldsmith. Such was his passion for the former that, when his sleep broke during an illness, he recited lengthy Shakespearean passages.¹⁸ Wright’s work was initially highly derivative of his teacher, the English painter Thomas Stothard (1755–1834), but it has a gentle charm, consistent with his evidently kindly character. Stylistically, it had long fallen out of fashion by the time of his death, lacking any Pre-Raphaelite intensity; thus John Lewis Roget, historian of the Old Water-Colour Society (now the Royal Watercolour Society), where Wright had regularly exhibited, commented that his paintings ‘were little heeded by the many, and when he passed away were scarcely missed’.¹⁹

Wright’s *Twelfth Night* (n.d.) depicts the capering of the high-spirited Sir Toby Belch and the gormless Sir Andrew Aguecheek, who are good friends – at least in the play’s opening act (Fig. 4). They exit dancing a jig, Sir Andrew asking, ‘Shall we set about some revels?’, and Sir Toby rhetorically replying, ‘What shall we do else?’²⁰ Wright’s



Fig. 4 *Twelfth Night*, n.d., watercolour, 202 x 265 mm. Artist John Masey Wright (gift of Archdeacon F.H.D. Smythe, 1957. Te Papa, 1957-0009-267).



Fig. 5 *King Lear and Cordelia*, n.d., watercolour, 169 x 150 mm. Artist John Masey Wright (gift of Archdeacon F.H.D. Smythe, 1957. Te Papa, (1957-0009-26).

other watercolour in Te Papa's collection complements this tomfoolery, and depicts a famously tragic Shakespearean moment. The artist's rendition does not attempt to scale sublime heights; instead, it is essentially illustrative, confining the scene to domestic genre (Fig. 5). Hitherto merely described as a *Scene from Shakespeare* (n.d.), the image has been identified by Mark Houlihan as the point in *King Lear* when the King, after his breakdown and rescue by Cordelia, wakes up and thinks he is in heaven, only to half-realise who she is and ask her:²¹

Be your tears wet? Yes, faith. I pray, weep not.
If you have poison for me, I will drink it.
I know you do not love me; for your sisters
Have, as I do remember, done me wrong;
You have some cause, they have not.²²

To which the weeping, forgiving Cordelia replies: 'No cause, no cause.' The figure of the Earl of Kent, Lear's

loyal lieutenant, witnesses this harrowing scene.

Both of Wright's works came from the collection of Archdeacon Francis Henry Dumville Smythe, who donated some 360 British School watercolours and drawings to the National Art Gallery in Wellington in 1957.²³ From the same source comes William Heath's (1794–1840) caricature of the rotund Sir John Falstaff in fine form, recruiting a motley cast of rustic yokels for the loyalist army in *Henry IV, Part II* (Fig. 6). While doing so, he encounters his old chum Justice Shallow, who recalls dissolute old times, and asks him: 'O, Sir John, do you remember since we lay all night in the windmill in Saint George's fields?'

'No more of that, good Master Shallow, no more of that', replies Falstaff.²⁴

'Ha! it was a merry night. And is Jane Nightwork alive?' asks Shallow, alluding to a woman of ill repute, clearly a participant in that night's activities.²⁵



Fig. 6 *Falstaff*, n.d., sepia watercolour, 220 x 165 mm. Artist William Heath (gift of Archdeacon F.H.D. Smythe, 1957. Te Papa, 1957-0009-302).

The proximity of Heath's chosen moment to playful sexual innuendo would probably have been unacceptable for the primmer Wright, or indeed a later Victorian artist, but it was meat and drink to Heath. A talented caricaturist whose pseudonym was Paul Pry, Heath inherited some of the robustness of the better-known James Gillray, and mercilessly targeted military hero turned reactionary Tory politician, the Duke of Wellington.²⁶

Despite Shakespeare's status as a favourite, indeed perennial, source of subject matter to later Victorian artists – particularly to the mid-century Pre-Raphaelites as well as to later artists such as John William Waterhouse and William Frederick Yeames – there is no cognisance of this in Te Papa.²⁷ This is more of a reflection on the museum's Victorian collection itself – which is inferior to those of the Auckland Art Gallery and the Dunedin Public Art Gallery – rather than indicating any imperviousness

to Shakespearean themes. The five watercolours by Charles Cattermole (1832–1900) in Te Papa's collection, particularly the *Hunting Scene* (n.d.) and *An Old English Mansion in the Days of Hawking* (n.d.), are all typically generic historical genre pieces without any overt documented storylines.²⁸ Deftly executed, they reflect this minor yet prolific artist's world, steeped in Jacobean and Stuart nostalgia. For several decades, Cattermole and his better-known uncle, George (a friend of Charles Dickens), were mainstays of the Royal Institute where they exhibited works of this kind. Sometimes these were overtly Shakespearean, such as in Charles's scenes from *Macbeth*; Dunedin Public Art Gallery owns a watercolour by the artist, *Scene from the 'Tempest'* (n.d.).²⁹



Fig. 7 *Maria and Clown*, 1932, wood engraving, 114 x 127 mm. Artist Eric Ravilious (gift of Rex Nan Kivell, 1951. Te Papa, 1951-0010-167).

The truculent Feste

The early modernist twentieth century is represented by two minor masterpieces of wood engraving, an illustrative medium that was central to the world of high-end, limited-edition book publication. The status of Eric Ravilious (1903–42) has been transformed in recent years from a clever and witty craftsman to a star of British art, with the *Observer* critic Laura Cumming hailing his 2015 exhibition at the Dulwich Picture Gallery as ‘exhilarating, enthralling and outstandingly beautiful’.³⁰ The artist’s outstanding graphic skills resulted in an output that straddled designs for glass, ceramics, textiles and furniture, as well as book illustrations (as here) and dust jackets. *Maria and Clown* was the title page for the boutique Golden Cockerel Press edition of *Twelfth Night* (1932), and the engraving in Te Papa comes from a separate limited edition (Fig. 7).

In this scene (Act I, Scene v, lines 1–6), Olivia’s lady-in-waiting, Maria, interrogates the clown Feste: ‘Nay, either tell me where thou hast been, or I will not open my lips so wide as a bristle may enter in way of thy excuse. My lady will hang thee for thy absence.’

Feste truculently replies: ‘Let her hang me: he that is well hanged in this world needs to fear no colours’ (in other words, does not need to be afraid of anything he sees).

Ravilious’s design is bold and strong, yet finely detailed. Delicate ribbons adorning Maria’s sleeve and Feste’s falling bells are meticulously rendered. Ravilious scholar James Russell notes that several years previously, while a student at the Royal College of Art, Ravilious had acted in a Christmas play in which he had worn particoloured tights and, according to his classmate Enid Marx, he ‘looked rather like a figure in his own engraving’.³¹



Fig. 8 *Timon of Athens*, c. 1939, wood engraving, 228 x 135 mm. Artist George Buday (gift of Rex Nan Kivell, 1953. Te Papa, 1953-0003-41).

Timon unravelling

George Buday (1907–90), a near contemporary of Ravilious, was born György Buday in Transylvania, and achieved artistic distinction in Hungary before winning a scholarship to study in Britain in 1937, where he remained for the rest of his life. His status was acknowledged in his election to the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers and as a fellow of the Society of Wood Engravers, while his principal claim to fame was his authorship of *The history of the Christmas card* (1954).³² Far more soulfully expressionist than the wittily urbane Ravilious, Buday proved an inspired choice as artist for *Timon of Athens* (Fig. 8) in ‘the most ambitious plan to illustrate Shakespeare in history’, the Limited Editions Club series

(1939–40).³³ In his excellent book *Illustrating Shakespeare*, Peter Whitfield regards the scheme as being as flawed as Boydell’s counterpart of nearly 150 years earlier, and notes how highly regarded contributors such as Graham Sutherland and Edward Gordon Craig proved deeply disappointing in their offerings. Yet Whitfield has high praise for Buday, who ‘hit upon the striking idea of giving us simply faces, all of Timon himself, but progressing from ease and joy at the opening of the play through conflict and suffering to death’.³⁴ One such print, the third in the series, when Timon is well on his way to misanthropic and material disenchantment, is in Te Papa’s collection.

Fomison’s Lear and an enigmatic sonnet

Two further prints by well-known artists bring the first part of this article to its conclusion. *King Lear* (1985) by Tony Fomison (1939–90) is a lithograph dating from late in this brilliant but troubled and self-destructive New Zealander’s career (Fig. 9). The theme was clearly important to the artist, and inspired at least two paintings; almost certainly, Fomison himself identified with Lear’s precarious mental stability and the black-comic role of the Fool in the play. Fomison’s figures are usually victims or other marginalised characters, struggling to hold on to their dignity, often plunged in a latter-day symbolist miasma of paint.³⁵ In the lithograph, the infirm, toothless, dazed-looking Lear is enthroned, wearing a crown that looks disturbingly like a paper party hat. Framing the composition are carvings of a vaguely Polynesian style, echoed by totemic posts on either side of the throne. The grainy effect of drawing on the lithographic stone admirably suited Fomison’s highly personal style, with its emphasis on line and shading. Some of the artist’s prints – like this one – are drawn with a minimalist, sketch-like hand and have an unfinished feel about them, conveying the sense of disintegration, yet he was always in control of the medium.³⁶

Shakespeare Sonnet Lithograph No 1 (Fig. 10) by Sidney Nolan (1917–92) is part of a larger portfolio of ten prints in varying media by ten leading late twentieth-century Australian artists that was commissioned by the Australian Legal Group in 1988 to commemorate the bicentenary of Australia.³⁷ A blurred, roughly executed composition of two merged heads, the work remains an unstudied enigma.



Fig. 9 *King Lear*, 1985, lithograph, 330 x 470 mm. Artist Tony Fomison (purchased 2009. Te Papa, CA000934/001/0012).

It bears little overt relationship to Sonnet 1 implicit in its title, in which Shakespeare begs the unknown dedicatee of his poem to have children and thus pass down his beauty. This is unless the viewer (optimistically) regards the smudgy and possibly bearded figure, intersecting with the larger and less-than-handsome head, to represent the poet and dedicatee respectively. It has been remarked of Nolan's poetic visions – which also encompass Greek mythology as well as numerous other Shakespeare sonnets – that 'these artworks are loaded with private meanings that he holds most closely to his heart, and may be among the most enigmatic of his works'.³⁸ Maybe so; but a work such as this, commissioned four years before Nolan's death, treads the tightrope between the startling lyrical beauty of some of his *Leda and the Swan* paintings (1958–60), and the artist's prolonged, smeary decline during his later career.



Fig. 10 *Shakespeare Sonnet Lithograph No 1, c.* 1988, lithograph, 510 x 525 mm. Artist Sidney Nolan (gift of the Australian Legal Group, 1988. Te Papa, 1988-0050-6).

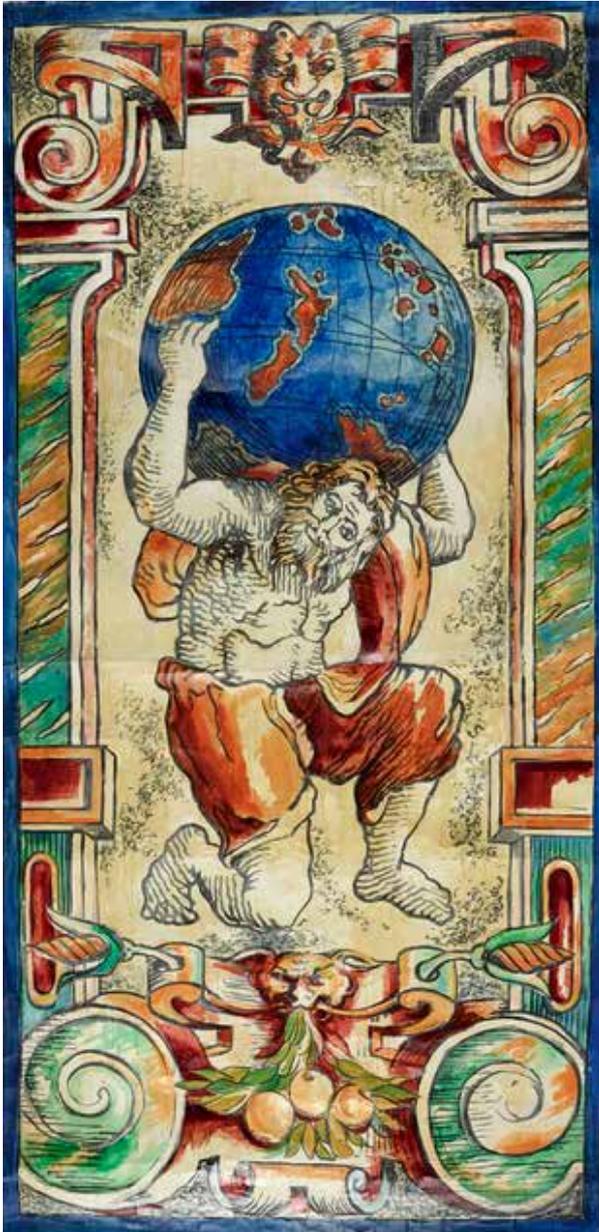


Fig. 11 *Atlas & His Globe*, 1989, poster paint, 3340 x 1800 mm. Artist Raymond Boyce (purchased 1997. Te Papa, GH008082).



Fig. 12 *Hercules*, 1989, poster paint, 3495 x 1750 mm. Artist Raymond Boyce (purchased 1997. Te Papa, GH009083).

Hanging Shakespeare

The most recent Shakespearean work at Te Papa is surely the most remarkable in the collection, and it would make a perfectly viable monograph in its own right. This comprises the set of large-scale poster-paint cartoons by Raymond Boyce (b. 1928) for the embroidered hangings at Shakespeare’s Globe in Bankside, London. The latter constitute the gift of the people of New Zealand to the rebuilt theatre and were unveiled there in 1994. While their story has been told in Dawn Sanders’s wittily entitled book *Very public hangings*, the account that follows makes special use of an interview between Boyce and this author, and gives emphasis specifically to the cartoons.³⁹

The commission came about through the Wellington Shakespeare Society, and its desire to contribute something special to the Globe Theatre (later Shakespeare’s Globe) project in London that would not be a reflection of the largesse of ‘great and good’ A-list supporters, but instead would testify to New Zealand’s distinctive appreciation of the cause. It was society member Rhona Davis who first wrote in 1983: ‘May I suggest curtains ... made of New Zealand wool.’⁴⁰ Following this, Sanders decided to ‘give Raymond Boyce a call’,⁴¹ because of his reputation as New Zealand’s first – and indeed foremost – stage set designer, with nearly 40 years’ experience with New Zealand Opera, the Royal New Zealand Ballet and, more recently, at Downstage Theatre in Wellington.⁴² Boyce warned the society:

You’ve got to be careful because it’s going to be a set where the design’s on, which we haven’t even talked about, which is going to be presented to the director of a company and what happens if he doesn’t like them? He’s not commissioning them, you are, as a present ... and directors don’t like using second-hand scenery, I can assure you of that, so beware!⁴³

The Wellington Shakespeare Society nevertheless persisted, and the initially wary Boyce vowed, ‘I’d do the best I could!’ in taking on the brief.⁴⁴ The question of appropriate themes for the hangings rapidly followed. Wellington author and theatre director Phillip Mann advised that the wool trade – which connected both Elizabethan England and contemporary New Zealand – should be alluded to, as should their respective status as seafaring nations. Ideas then gelled rapidly: Sir Francis Drake’s circumnavigation of the world, the world as the Globe and, indeed, the new Globe Theatre. Boyce recalls: ‘It was pointed out

to me ... by London actually, that instead of the globe being held up showing the northern hemisphere, wouldn’t it be a good idea if it actually showed the southern hemisphere?’⁴⁵ This led rapidly to Boyce’s design for *Atlas & His Globe*, where the straining figure bears the weight of a delightfully enlarged New Zealand (Fig. 11). On performance days at the original Globe Theatre, home to the Lord Chamberlain’s Men and later the King’s Men, a flag showing Atlas might well have flown.

Another dramatic hero was Hercules, hence the design for the matching hanging that depicts the latter’s hefty figure, clad in his lion skin and swinging his club (Fig. 12). Boyce stresses that Hercules was ‘a fond god to all Elizabethans, they all wished to be Herculean’. In both instances, Boyce adhered broadly to ‘Shakespearean authenticity’; indeed, he stressed that ‘one couldn’t depart from the established way of drawing’. For all four compositions, he conducted ‘a lot of research into embroidery and tapestries, because we had to decide how they were going to be made’. A tapestry woven in the authentic early modern manner was soon eliminated as an option because of the time and costs that entailed: ‘This was no go, so it had to be embroidery.’⁴⁶

Venus and Adonis

The Atlas and Hercules figures were intended to function as the two narrower, centrally placed hangings for the *frons scenae* (stage background) and were designed for the central door of the stage. On either side of them would be placed a further pair of hangings that were twice their width. The subject matter was rapidly determined: depictions of Venus and Adonis, inspired by Shakespeare’s poem of that title (1593), which was immensely successful in his lifetime. When this author asked Boyce why that choice was made, as ‘you think of the plays, or most people do, way before they think of the poems’, Boyce replied:

That’s true, but we wanted something which was important to Elizabethans at that time ... in the week that we decided this, there was a tavern which was built in 1600 in St Albans which was then being renovated. On the first floor ... plaster was taken off the wall, and below the plaster was a mural of the story of Venus and Adonis.⁴⁷

Boyce felt handsomely vindicated by this discovery, and ‘it just had to be that’.⁴⁸



Fig. 13 *Adonis*, 1989, poster paint, 2365 x 2065 mm. Artist Raymond Boyce (purchased 1997. Te Papa, GH008081). The attached hand-written paper slips indicate which local group or individual embroiderer was to work on the respective part of the hanging.

The youthful, beautiful, rose-cheeked Adonis (Fig. 13) is mounted on his ‘trampling courser’ (line 261) and is characteristically at ‘the chase; / Hunting he lov’d, but love [Venus] he laugh’d to scorn’ (lines 3–4). The ‘foul, grim and urchin-snouted’ wild boar that would prove his undoing is represented more heraldically than menacingly (line 1105). The animals, birds, insects and fish that delightfully enrich the composition also testify to the special regard in which they held Adonis’s beauty.⁴⁹

In the matching design, the love-struck Venus appears more self-absorbed in her beauty than fixated on Adonis (Fig. 14). Boyce confessed, ‘what I liked myself is Venus with her mirror, so you can see just a bit of her face’.⁵⁰ To her left, Adonis’s courser and ‘a breeding jennet, lusty, young and proud’ prance in amorous poses (line 260). To her right sprouts an improbably large fritillary, the aftermath to Adonis’s tragic demise. As the poem explains:

And in his blood that on the ground lay spill’d,
A purple flower sprung up, chequer’d with white,
Resembling well his pale cheeks, and the blood
Which in round drops upon their whiteness stood.⁵¹

Boyce’s first design for the fritillary was on a single stem, but as a friend pointed out, ‘They don’t grow like that’. Botanic accuracy in form – if not in scale – was necessary, as was historical authenticity. When he designed Shakespearean stage sets, Boyce stressed ‘You had to persuade the audience, what they were seeing was what the playwright intended. You didn’t take chances.’⁵² This applied still more to the hangings, given their status as a permanent fixture. Rather than merely illustrating Shakespeare, Boyce was attempting to create something Shakespearean, and judging from the subsequent critical reception of the hangings, he succeeded admirably.

Although Boyce had made very few designs for hangings or tapestries prior to these, he worked rapidly and with



Fig. 14 *Venus*, 1989, poster paint, 2340 x 2060 mm. Artist Raymond Boyce (purchased 1997. Te Papa, GH008080).

assurance, needing to make 'very few' preparatory sketches before embarking on more refined designs. He had 'a focus from the beginning, you might say ... I knew where I was going. It's my training, quite honestly.' With no false modesty, he added: 'As soon as I picked up a paintbrush I usually was pretty right in what I was putting down', and the cartoons for the hangings were no exception.⁵³ Their fluidity, assurance, ease and, at the same time, a sense of exhilaration in their production all remain vividly evident.

500 women embroiderers

The remarkable story of how Boyce's gouache cartoons became an embroidered, appliquéd and dyed woollen reality, installed in Shakespeare's Globe, lies outside the scope of this article, and is in any case admirably chronicled in Sanders's account (Figs 15–18). What should be noted, however, is Boyce's continued admiration of how the 500 New Zealand

women embroiderers in their sometimes quite small regional 'collectives' explored and developed his designs 'in a way I had never expected. They improved them all the way through'. Indeed, he 'just couldn't believe the ingenuity ... of what they were doing, like the woman from Nelson, [who] made her sheep with real sheep wool and that's her concept. It's wonderful, isn't it?'⁵⁴ It is no exaggeration to claim that the hangings are a triumphant outcome of the women's art movement in New Zealand, reflected both in the ingenuity of execution that Boyce so admires, and at the same time the harmoniously collective spirit behind their production. Why then is there so little recognition of this? For whatever reason, the hangings are not on the New Zealand art historian's or art critic's radar. Blame could be laid at the ongoing hierarchy of art practice, and the attendant marginalisation of the 'decorative art' of embroidery, as distinct from higher-status media, such as painting, sculpture, installation and video art. Another likely factor that prevented greater recognition



Figs. 15-18 *Shakespeare's Globe hanging: Hercules*, 1990–92, embroidered and appliquéd wool. Makers 500 New Zealand women embroiderers, after Raymond Boyce (*Shakespeare's Globe*, Bankside, London).



Fig. 16 *Shakespeare's Globe hanging: Atlas*.

is the stylistic constraints and conventions that the hangings, by definition, needed to respect and embody: anything edgy or experimentally contemporary would have been out of the question. What remains unquestionable, however, is the popularity of the hangings and their success as a 'must-see', not least for the many New Zealanders who visit London. They are an understandable source of pride for the families and friends of their now elderly or deceased makers. As Boyce confirms, the hangings are a greater attraction to some visitors than the programme of Shakespeare's Globe itself.⁵⁵

A timely hanging?

While the influence of the Shakespeare's Globe wall-hangings is inevitably difficult to quantify, Boyce believes that their production helped to raise Shakespeare's profile in the education and consciousness of New Zealanders. They could be credibly regarded as part of a wider cultural movement that also brought about the foundation of the Shakespeare Globe Centre New Zealand in June 1991, just weeks after the hangings were unveiled in Wellington and, in the following year, the first regional Shakespeare Festival in schools. It would seem appropriate on Te Papa's part to recognise this phenomenon by exhibiting Raymond Boyce's cartoons, as well as giving overdue recognition to their elderly but still immensely engaged and engaging creator.

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Fig. 17 *Shakespeare's Globe hanging: Adonis.*



Fig. 18 *Shakespeare's Globe hanging: Venus.*

Notes

1. See Mary Kisler, *Angels and aristocrats: early European art in New Zealand public collections*, Auckland: Godwit, 2010, pp. 190–192.
2. Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, ‘*The Play Scene in Hamlet*’, in: *Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki* [website], 2016, retrieved on 1 August 2016 from www.aucklandartgallery.com/explore-art-and-ideas/artwork/134/the-play-scene-in-hamlet.
3. Auckland War Memorial Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira, ‘Marionette’, in: *Auckland War Memorial Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira* [website], n.d., retrieved on 1 August 2016 from www.aucklandmuseum.com/collection/object/am_humanhistory-object-89858.
4. Auckland Council, ‘The bard lives on’, in: *Our Auckland* [website], 2016, retrieved on 1 August 2016 from <http://ourauckland.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/articles/news/2016/05/the-bard-lives-on>.
5. For Muller, see especially Jan Piet Filedt Kok, ‘Jan Harmensz. Muller as printmaker – I’, *Print Quarterly* 11(3), 1994, pp. 223–264.
6. For Plutarch in Dutch, see especially Olga van Marion, ‘The reception of Plutarch in the Netherlands: Octavia and Cleopatra in the heroic epistles of J.B. Wellekens (1710)’, in: Karl Enekel, Jan de Jong and Jeanine De Landsheer (eds), *Recreating ancient history: episodes from the Greek and Roman past in the arts and literature of the early modern period*, Boston and Leiden: Brill, 2002, pp. 213–234.
7. Kok, ‘Jan Harmensz. Muller’, p. 224.
8. *Antony and Cleopatra*, V. ii. 339–342.
9. For a discussion on this painting, by Elizabeth Einberg, see Jane Martineau (ed.), *Shakespeare in art*, London and New York: Merrell, 2003, pp. 52–53.
10. See especially Jonathan Bate, ‘The Shakespeare phenomenon’, in: Martineau, *Shakespeare in art*, pp. 9–19.
11. Jonathan Bate and Dora Thornton, *Shakespeare: staging the world*, London: British Museum Press, 2012, p. 266.
12. Bate, ‘The Shakespeare phenomenon’, pp. 13–15.
13. Robyn Hamlyn, ‘The Shakespeare galleries of John Boydell and James Woodmason’, in: Martineau, *Shakespeare in art*, pp. 97–113.
14. Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, ‘Genevieve. (From a Poem by S.T. Coleridge Entitled “Love”’, in: *Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa* [website], n.d., retrieved on 1 August 2016 from <http://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/object/43608>.
15. Samuel Johnson wrote of the play: ‘To remark the folly of the fiction, the absurdity of the conduct, the confusion of the names and manners of different times, and the impossibility of the events in any system of life, were to waste criticism upon unresisting imbecility, upon faults too evident for detection, and too gross for aggravation.’ Quoted in ‘Cymbeline’, in: *Wikipedia: the free encyclopedia* [website], 2016, retrieved on 1 August 2016 from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cymbeline>.
16. Dawe proved successful in this ambition. He was elected as an associate of the Royal Academy in 1809, and a full member in 1814. See Galina Andreeva, ‘Dawe, George (1781–1829)’, in: *Oxford dictionary of national biography* [website], 2004, retrieved on 1 August 2016 from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7328>.
17. See Tate, ‘George Dawe: *Imogen Found in the Cave of Belarius*’, in: *Tate* [website], n.d., retrieved on 1 August 2016 from www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/dawe-imogen-found-in-the-cave-of-belarius-t00718.
18. See Simon Fenwick, ‘Wright, John Masey (1777–1866)’, in: *Oxford dictionary of national biography* [website], 2004, retrieved on 1 August 2016 from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/30039>.
19. Quoted in *ibid*.
20. *Twelfth Night*, I. iii. 240–241.
21. Mark Houlahan, email to the author, 29 July 2016.
22. *King Lear*, IV. vii. 70–74.
23. William McAloon (ed.), *Art at Te Papa*, Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2009, p. 10.
24. Falstaff’s line is inscribed on the watercolour.
25. *2 Henry IV*, III. ii. 169–172.
26. See ‘William Heath’, in: *All Things Victorian* [website], n.d., retrieved on 1 August 2016 from www.avictorian.com/Heath_William.html.
27. See Peter Whitfield, *Illustrating Shakespeare*, London: British Library, 2013, pp. 106–125.
28. Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, ‘*Hunting Scene*’, in: *Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa* [website], n.d., retrieved on 1 August 2016 from <http://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/object/43123>; Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, ‘*An Old English Mansion in the Days of Hawking*’, in: *Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa* [website], n.d., retrieved on 1 August 2016 from <http://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/object/36849>.
29. Dunedin Public Art Gallery, ‘*Scene from the “Tempest”*’, in: *Dunedin Public Art Gallery* [website], n.d., retrieved on 1 August 2016 from <http://collection.dunedin.art.museum/search.do?view=detail&page=1&id=26221&db=object>.
30. Laura Cumming, ‘Ravilious review – exhilarating, enthralling and outstandingly beautiful’, *Observer*, 5 April 2015, retrieved on 1 August 2016 from www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/apr/05/ravilious-dulwich-picture-gallery-review-watercolours. For Ravilious, see especially Alan Powers, *Eric Ravilious: artist and designer*, London: Lund Humphries, 2013.
31. James Russell, ‘Ravilious/Shakespeare’, blog post, 6 January 2016, retrieved on 1 August 2016 from <http://jamesrussellontheblog.blogspot.co.nz/2016/01/ravilious-shakespeare.html>.

32. British Museum, 'George Buday (Biographical details)', in: *The British Museum* [website], n.d., retrieved on 1 August 2016 from www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/term_details.aspx?bioId=130711.
33. Whitfield, *Illustrating Shakespeare*, p. 146.
34. Ibid., p. 149.
35. Michael Dunn, *New Zealand painting: a concise history*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2003, pp. 139–141.
36. Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, 'Tony Fomison: New Zealander, b. 1939, d. 1990: *King Lear*', in: *Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu* [website], n.d., retrieved on 1 August 2016 from <https://christchurchartgallery.org.nz/collection/85-2313-13>.
37. British Museum, '*Shakespeare Sonnet Lithograph No 11* The Australian Legal Group Contemporary Print Collection', in: *The British Museum* [website], n.d., retrieved on 1 August 2016 from http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=687311&partId=1&people=99667&peoA=99667-2-60&sortBy=fromDateDesc&page=1.
38. QUT Art Museum, 'Sidney Nolan: a poetic vision', in: *QUT Art Museum* [website], 2008, retrieved on 1 August 2016 from www.artmuseum.qut.edu.au/downloads/Teachers_notes_sidney_nolan.pdf.
39. Dawn Sanders, *Very public hangings: the story behind New Zealand's gift to the Globe Theatre London*, Wellington: Wellington Shakespeare Society, 1992. See also Mark Stocker, 'Creating something Shakespearean: Raymond Boyce and the Globe hangings', Te Papa blog, 22 May 2016, retrieved on 1 August 2016 from <http://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2016/05/22/creating-something-shakespearean-raymond-boyce-and-the-globe-hangings>. In addition to the four main compositions discussed here, there are 10 further cartoons in Te Papa's collection by Raymond Boyce of decorative border motifs for the hangings.
40. Sanders, *Very public hangings*, p. 13.
41. Raymond Boyce, interview with the author, Wellington, 13 May 2016.
42. See Bill Guest, 'Theatre design – set design', *Te ara – the encyclopedia of New Zealand* [website], 2014, retrieved on 1 August 2016 from www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/theatre-design/page-1.
43. Boyce, interview with the author.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid. See also Sanders, *Very public hangings*, p. 14.
48. Boyce, interview with the author.
49. 'When he beheld his shadow in the brook, / The fishes spread on it their golden gills, / When he was by, the birds such pleasure took / That some would sing, some other in their bills / Would bring him mulberries and

ripe cherries: / He fed them with his sight, they him with berries' (*Venus and Adonis*, 1099–1104).

50. Boyce, interview with the author.
51. *Venus and Adonis*, 1167–1170.
52. Boyce, interview with the author.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid. See also Sanders, *Very public hangings*, p. 24.
55. Boyce, interview with the author.

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