

Paradise Possessed
THE REX NAN KIVELL COLLECTION

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The Missionary Settlement Rangihoua on the North Side of the Bay of Islands c.1832
oil on wood panel; 22.3 x 30.5 cm (NK131)

Back cover:

Bryan Kneale (b.1930)

Portrait of Rex de C. Nan Kivell 1960
oil on composition board; 127 x 71.2 cm (NK9530)

Unless otherwise indicated, all of the images and items that appear in this publication are held in the Rex Nan Kivell Collection of the National Library of Australia.

FOREWORD

In the annals of the National Library of Australia, the acquisition of the Rex Nan Kivell Collection of historical paintings, watercolours, prints, drawings, books, maps, manuscripts and related materials stands as one of the great landmarks in the building of the national collection.

In the 1940s, the Library commenced discussions with Rex Nan Kivell, the New Zealand-born collector, connoisseur and art dealer who had resided in England for many years, where, from the 1920s, he had begun to build a collection focusing on the history of the European exploration and settlement of the Pacific, Australia and New Zealand. These discussions led to the purchase by the Australian Government of the first major instalment of the collection and to two subsequent gifts made directly to the National Library. Further materials were bequeathed to the Library after Nan Kivell's death in 1977. In discharging its brief to build a comprehensive collection of documentary materials relating to Australia and the Australian people, the Library has continued to build around Nan Kivell's collection, enriching and extending the foundation that it represents.

In this centenary year of the birth of Sir Rex Nan Kivell, the National Library pays tribute to the life and work of a man whose personal vision and strong sense of the history of the region of his birth have provided the means for scholars, researchers and members of the public to access a diverse body of materials which form part of the historical record of the Antipodean world. In 1974, Professor Bernard Smith predicted that the Nan Kivell Collection would come to exercise a substantial influence on Australasian historical scholarship. Over the years, the Library has observed with pleasure the use that has been made of the collection by many scholars and researchers, and in exhibitions in Australia, New Zealand, Japan and the United States of America.

These essays are issued to accompany the exhibition *Paradise Possessed: The Rex Nan Kivell Collection* which has been prepared to celebrate the centenary of Nan Kivell's birth in April 1898. While not yet the definitive appraisal either of the collection itself or of Nan Kivell's own remarkable life, these essays offer a glimpse of the man, and present insights into the range and diversity of a collection which represents one of the finest cultural benefactions to have been presented to the Australian people. The National Library of Australia is the proud custodian of this collection on behalf of the peoples of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, and is delighted to provide the opportunity for some of its riches to be shared with the wider public.

Warren Horton
Director-General
National Library of Australia



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