

12 **DON BINNEY**

Karuhiruhi, Te Henga
Oil on canvas 178 x 84
Signed & dated 1967

\$250,000 - 350,000

Provenance:
Purchased from Barry Lett Galleries, 1968

This splendid large scale painting of a karuhiruhi, or pied shag was acquired from Barry Lett Galleries. It is now on the market for the first time in fifty years.

Whilst *Karuhiruhi, Te Henga* is undeniably and essentially a classic Binney bird painting, it represents a departure from the soaring bird format most readily associated with the artist's work. The psychology and spirituality of formalism has herein been handled to remarkable effect. In the foreground, the karuhiruhi appears at one with the rock on which it is perched, the two seamlessly integrated through a fluidity of painted line and colour. The bird serves as a focal point from which we, as viewers, are encouraged to meditate upon the infinity of sky and sea.

In some respects, it seems that Binney's magnificent cerulean blue skyscape dominates this work. It gives weight to the composition, facilitating a sense of momentum.

From the canvas being split horizontally into three segments, the painting offers an impression of compressing downwards upon itself. At the same time, the sky casts the subject matter over which it presides - bird, rock, beach, sand and waves into dramatic relief.

Te Henga is the West Auckland coastal area to which Binney returned to time and again in his work, and although it is explicitly identified in the title of this work, the exact location is secondary to the truth of painted form. Conceived at a time when an identity of modern formalism was still being discovered in New Zealand art, *Karuhiruhi, Te Henga*, invites us to more deeply explore the artist's relationship with, and contribution to, our national modernism. Both the West Auckland beach and arching, elegant karuhiruhi function as a means of expression through which Binney was able to encounter the sublime potential of our natural surrounds.

