

One of the most distinctive geological features on the west coast of the North Island is Mount Taranaki and, since the mid-nineteenth century, the mountain has inspired numerous artists. Doris Lusk appears amongst an impressive list which includes Charles Heaphy, Dorothy Kate Richmond, Christopher Perkins, Michael Smither, Toss Woollaston, Don Driver, sculptor Neil Dawson and photographer Laurence Aberhart. For many the allure and ever changing moods of the sacred mountain remains a powerful touchstone.

After studying at the King Edward Technical College in Dunedin, where Doris Lusk was born in 1916, she moved to Christchurch in the early 1940s, began teaching at the School of Fine Arts in the mid-1960s and, today is acknowledged as one of New Zealand's foremost modernist landscape painters of her generation. Her works are held in all important public collections.

During the 1950s, the decade Lusk painted her most well-known image *The Pumping Station* 1958, she also produced two oils and a watercolour of Mt Taranaki. Her oil *Mt Egmont from Opunake* was followed four years later by *Botanical Gardens*,

*Hawera*, an image of the Hawera observatory, garden hedges and the mountain interwoven into a haunting surreal image. It was exhibited in the 1956 Group Show as *Mt Egmont from Opunake*, identifying the painting's location. From Opunake, on the south western side of Mt Taranaki, the distinctive Franthams Peak is clearly visible and recorded in the painting. Consistent with the artist's life-long interest in built structures and the transformation of landscape through habitation, a railway bridge crossing the Taungatara Stream is centrally placed in the composition. Broadly executed, the rounded, rhythmical landforms in the foreground are lahars, the result of lava flows from an ancient volcanic eruption. Touches of pink amongst the rich ochre foreground are gently reflected in the sky on the left. A line of clouds running horizontally across the sky above the mountain emphasise the expansive, tranquil vista. The painting was formerly owned by the artist Tony Fomison, a student and friend of the artist.

Grant Banbury



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### DORIS LUSK

*Mt Egmont from Opunake*

Oil on board 60 x 91.5

Signed & dated 1956

\$30,000 - 50,000

Provenance:

Ex Tony Fomison Collection

Private Collection, Christchurch

Exhibited:

*Group Show*, 1956, cat #36

Illustrated:

p. 57 *Back & Beyond: New Zealand Painting for the Young & Curious*, Gregory O'Brien, AUP, 2008

p. 133 *Landscape Paintings of New Zealand: A Journey from North to South*, Expanded and Revised Edition Christopher Johnstone, Godwit, 2013