

## PRESS RELEASE

### ***Hawke's Bay Museum & Art Gallery, Napier, Receives Major Gift***

The *Hawke's Bay Museum & Art Gallery* has been gifted eight paintings by the New Zealand/English artist Felix Kelly. The paintings have been gifted by Miss Jean Russell-Smith of Chichester, England.

Miss Russell-Smith identified the *HBMAG, Napier* as an institution with a record of giving prominence to the art and design of the 1930s and 1940s and chose it as the final home for the paintings over a number of larger New Zealand galleries.

Director of the *HBMAG, Napier* Douglas Lloyd Jenkins, says -

'we are thrilled by this very generous gift. Felix Kelly is an important, if neglected, New Zealand artist and we are very excited to now be home to the largest collections of his works held by a New Zealand institution.'

Felix Kelly has been the subject of a recent biography *Fix: the life and art of Felix Kelly* by Dr Don Bassett of Auckland University Art History Department. Felix Kelly's archives, papers and letters are held by Te Papa, Wellington. *HBMAG, Napier* is currently working on a Felix Kelly Exhibition that will open in November 2008.

*HBMAG, Napier* acknowledges the support of the Friends of the Hawke's Bay Cultural Trust who assisted with the freight and insurance on the Felix Kelly gift.



Barbara Arnott, Chair of the Hawke's Bay Cultural Trust, says -

'this marvelous and unexpected gift illustrates the way in which the *HBMAG, Napier* is now being seen as a potential home for major art treasures, not only by New Zealanders but internationally.'

Felix Kelly was born in Auckland in 1914. He moved to London in the 1930s where he became a successful graphic artist and illustrator whose work was characterised by strong surrealist leanings. In the 1940s his works gained attention as a key component of the Neo-Romantic movement and he was identified as one of the leading young British painters of his day. Kelly's mature works focused on depictions of houses set in Surrealist landscapes. These were often drawn from his childhood memories and occasionally depicted New Zealand subjects. In the 1980s Felix Kelly painted the Garden Room murals at Castle Howard, Yorkshire as part of the filming of the ITV series *Brideshead Revisited*.

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