

Trevor Moffitt (1936-2006)*Miner Contemplating*

oil on board

signed 'Moffitt' (lower right); signed and inscribed with title with original Auckland Art Gallery exhibition to reverse

59 x 86.5cm

\$20,000 - \$30,000

PROVENANCE

Private collection, Australia

EXHIBITED

New Zealand Painting 1966, Auckland Art Gallery, December 1966, cat. no. 27. (original exhibition label to reverse)

Note: this work has been painted over a work from the McKenzie Series, see overpainted signature upper right

Born in Gore in 1936, Trevor Moffitt is arguably one of New Zealand's most notable narrative painters & respected regional artists. During the 1950s he attended the University of Canterbury School of Fine Art, despite his father's opposition. Here he was taught by noted Canterbury artists including W A. Sutton and Russell Clark who, searched for a particularly New Zealand style. Moffitt's interest has always been with the places and stories unique to this country, a celebration of ordinary working New Zealanders and folklore.

In 1962 he began his first major series, *Gold Miners*, based on his early childhood experience of miners in Waikaia, a gold mining town in Southland, where he spent his early childhood. The series was a deliberate attempt to place a figure in the New Zealand landscape...

'...little or nothing had been down [in this genre] and if there were figures and landscape painting back at the turn of the century they tended to be microscopic sort of figures whereas I tried [a] balance between the landscape and the person [of] about 50:50' 1.

Drawing on his family stories from his grandfather's experience in the goldfields, he depicted the everyday realities of daily life – the human spectrum. The works were painted in a bold, direct expressionistic style employing a muted colour palette. Simplicity was key and he used his trademark technique of thickly applied impasto paint and solid tonally modelled forms to convey the messages in his paintings.

'Most people truly thought the *Gold Miners* were a joke. They had no eyes. "Why is he painted with no eyes?" "simple – the lust for gold blinds you." 2.

While individual works were sold, the series was not show as a whole until late 1965. *Miners* were exhibited at The Group Show in November 1963.

1. *Our People, Our Century* screened TV One, 2000

2. Interview Trevor Moffitt, Chris Ronayne, *Trevor Moffitt a biography* (2006) p.59.