

The year I worked with Paul Beadle as his last student at Elam School of Fine Arts, Auckland University (1982), he was already suffering from the first symptoms of Alzheimer's disease. However, even though his memory was failing, it seemed as though he was in perfect control of the essence of his art: through his intuitive playfulness, his strong sense of aesthetic in every artistic decision, and his great care and respect for techniques and tools.

Although he did some very large monumental sculptures in Australia, the smaller, more intricate pieces such as the Auckland University mace and the *Relief of Algiers* are ones by which I most remember him. The latter is a sculpture of an official Navy brothel in Algiers and the fun and games going on therein. By making an architectural framework from strips of wax, and occupying the space with tiny forms that represent the different personalities in the brothel or, as in the mace, the various faculties in the university, he created lyrical personalised worlds out of literal and symbolic subjects alike. The figures are made up of tiny wax balls - balls for heads, breasts and bottoms. Eyes, fingers and knee joints were little drops of hot wax, delicately and surely placed. One day, after we had been working silently together, he opened a drawer which was full of wax balls and beckoned me to come over and have a look. 'You need a lot of balls for this kind of work!', he said.

His medal work shows a deep respect for the early Greek and Roman coin tradition, combined with a perfect sense of line and composition, without losing that fresh and naive delight in nature which is really his trademark. The designs which he proposed for the new New Zealand coinage in 1967 included two birds which are a fine example of this, and it is a great disappointment for many people who know his work that these were not accepted to form a part of New Zealand's aesthetic identity.

Perhaps the most immediate way by which I am often reminded of him is that collective-conscious link that any worker in an ancient craft experiences, that is, his tools. Paul Beadle's workbench had nothing throwaway on it: the wax pot might have been a tin can for cat meat at one time but the wax poured perfectly from it and that was why it was still being used. The fat

to separate wax from the marble slab was 'from the Sunday roast'. And his hand-made wax tools attained something like perfection through constant and loving use by the time he finally had to leave them. Even his hands, though already a little unsteady that year, still retained the deftness that came from a lifetime of exploring materials as a highly-skilled relief modeller.

Paul Beadle held a number of teaching posts during his career, first at the National Art School of Sydney in 1946 and then as head of the National Art School in Newcastle, New South Wales, in the mid 1950s. In 1958 he became principal of the South Australian School of Arts and Crafts until he moved to New Zealand in 1961 to take up the post of Foundation Professor of Fine Arts and dean and head of department at Auckland University. Whether he gave to all his students in art institutions what he gave to me in his last year I do not know, but to me he was a mentor in the Renaissance workshop tradition: one who, when I was working alongside him on commissions he was no longer able to do, conveyed a very sensitive personal instruction in techniques, attitudes and ideas about life and work. And all this, with very little dialogue.

In a sculpture department dedicated in that year largely to performance and installation work, Paul's studio was imbued with a confident sense of timelessness, with objects dating back to Greek and Roman times and the strata of his own life's work. He was born in England in 1917 and studied drawing and sculpture at the Central School of Arts and Crafts. He was involved in submarine service with the Royal Navy during the war.

It was only when I came to London in 1984 that I realised how relevant his European origins still were to him, and this had perhaps been kept alive by his involvement with FIDEM since 1955. He had casually mentioned to me that I should go to the British Museum and show my work. That was how I became involved with BAMS and FIDEM. In doing so, I realised the maturity of Paul's work in a larger context, and on returning to New Zealand to design the 1990 Commonwealth Games medals (he had designed the medal for the Games in 1979) it seemed appropriate to suggest an exhibition of medallic art.



Paul Beadle: *Pan Pipes, Acanthiussa, and Egretta Alba.*

With the progressive movements in sculpture and especially in New Zealand, a country that is distanced from Europe, Paul's work became an important link, even in his own lifetime. His artist wife Betty, while she was caring for him in his last difficult years, became the driving force behind the creation of the New Zealand Contemporary Medallion Group, which consists of artists from all disciplines and has had several successful exhibitions since that first exhibition in 1989. Members of the group exhibited at the FIDEM congresses in Helsinki and London, and through this group there has been an exciting revival of medallic art in New Zealand, inspired by his work.

In this way Paul Beadle's influence has extended beyond his lifetime and his work has in a sense endured through artistic trends. It is the mark of a man of deep sensitivity who pursued his own ideals in his work, from which others have benefitted enormously.

Marian Fountain