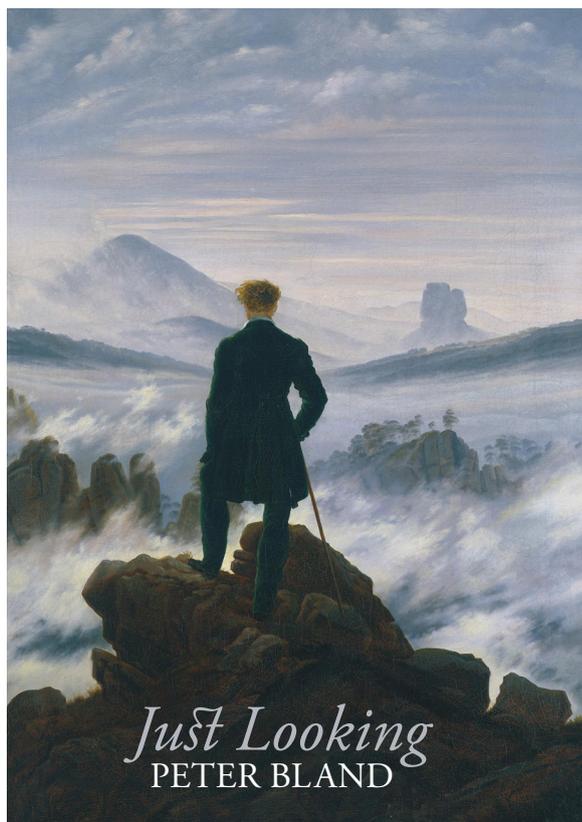


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JUST LOOKING Peter Bland

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to celebrate Peter's 85th birthday

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**#85YearOldPoet #ArtPoems
#HowArtistsSeeTheWorld**

"No New Zealand poet has greater graphic energy or a more creative visual sense. He writes in a carefully crafted vernacular of deceptive skill and power."

—Kevin Ireland, *NZ Listener*

An avid collector of works of art, and long fascinated by how artists see the world, Peter Bland has drawn together poems for his 85th birthday that he's written over the years about paintings and the visual image. Never the name-dropper or cultural snob, Bland lines up art by a child alongside art by Brueghel or Gauguin, and then takes the reader into the story of the painter or the painting, both shining new light and deepening the mystery.

Gauguin in Auckland, 1895

I'm stuck in a swamp called Freemans Bay.
(The ship for Papeete will take ten days
to repair a propeller blade. We ran
into some whales.) My host
is a mad Parisian who claims
he invaded this place with a couple of brigs
over fifty years ago. He's gaga,
nearly ninety, and gives
piano lessons to the daughters of the rich.

'I won't,' he raves, 'go home
out of shame ... I surrendered
in two days.' I explain
that no one in Paris gives a fig.
He bawls like a child. A goddess lives
on the far horizon. Her womb's the sun
and I'm ten days late for her bed. Downstairs
a white-frosted schoolgirl murders Liszt
while my host beats time with her parasol.

Peter was born in Yorkshire in 1934 and emigrated to New Zealand twenty years later, for many years dividing his time between the two countries. He was associated with the Wellington group of poets which included James K Baxter and Louis Johnson, and is now a much-loved part of the Auckland poetry scene. Bland has written plays, poems, children's books and a memoir, and is the recipient of numerous awards for his poetry including the Prime Minister's Award for Literary Excellence.



Sales / distribution: David Bateman
Bryce Gibson • bryceg@bateman.co.nz • 09 415 7664

www.thecubapress.nz • hello@thecubapress.nz • Box 9321, Wellington 6141