

## Charles Frederick Goldie – De Marlotte aux Maoris

The attraction exerted by France on the artistic community in the second half of the 19th century is now broadly recognized. Beyond Paris and its renowned art schools, many foreign painters also took up residence in localities then considered more conducive to the naturalist aspirations of the time. Barbizon obviously comes first to mind, as does the interest for Grez-sur-Loing among British, American, Scandinavian, and Japanese painters. This short article<sup>1</sup> focuses on a lesser-known painter who nevertheless literally traveled half the planet to visit Marlotte!

Charles Frederick Goldie was born in Auckland, New Zealand, on October 20, 1870, to an amateur artist mother, who encouraged her son's artistic tendencies early on. From high school, he won several awards from the Auckland Arts Society and the New Zealand Arts Students Association. It was after studying with Louis John Steele<sup>2</sup> that he exhibited two still lifes at the Auckland Academy of Fine Arts. Those had such a positive impact on a former governor of New Zealand that he asked Goldie's father to allow his son to continue his artistic training abroad.

After a brief stay in Australia, Goldie found himself in Paris in July 1893, staying in the artists' district of Montparnasse. He studied there at the cosmopolitan Académie Julian until January 1898, under the direction of William-Adolphe Bouguereau (1825-1905), known for his mythologically inspired nudes and his portraits of children, as much as for his opposition to works of the impressionists. During this period, Goldie also took anatomy classes at the École des Beaux-Arts. He already regularly won prizes in studio competitions and in 1896 received a gold medal for a still life in an internal competition at the École. During this formative period, he devoted himself to copying old masters at the Louvre and other galleries and traveled extensively throughout Western Europe. Unlike the few New Zealand painters who studied art in Paris for short periods, Charles Goldie is the only one of his generation to comply with the rigor of French academic training. In this context, an interest for the naturalist and impressionist trends seems very unlikely! Was it therefore curiosity about the recent artistic movements of Barbizon, then Marlotte, which nevertheless attracted young Charles Frédéric Goldie to the Fontainebleau region? In any case, we owe him a very beautiful representation



*Autoportrait*, par Charles-Frederick Goldie, 1896

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<sup>1</sup> A more complete article will be published in a future issue of the *Bulletin des Amis de Bourron-Marlotte*

<sup>2</sup> Louis John Steele (1842-1918), painter of English origin, trained at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris

of the *Chemin des Trembleaux, in Marlotte*. This oil on wood was sold at an auction for \$230,000 in 2022!



Marlotte - Paris, 1894, par Charles-Frederick Goldie

A second oil on wood is entitled *Burron - Oct 94* and represents a village street, most certainly in Bourron!

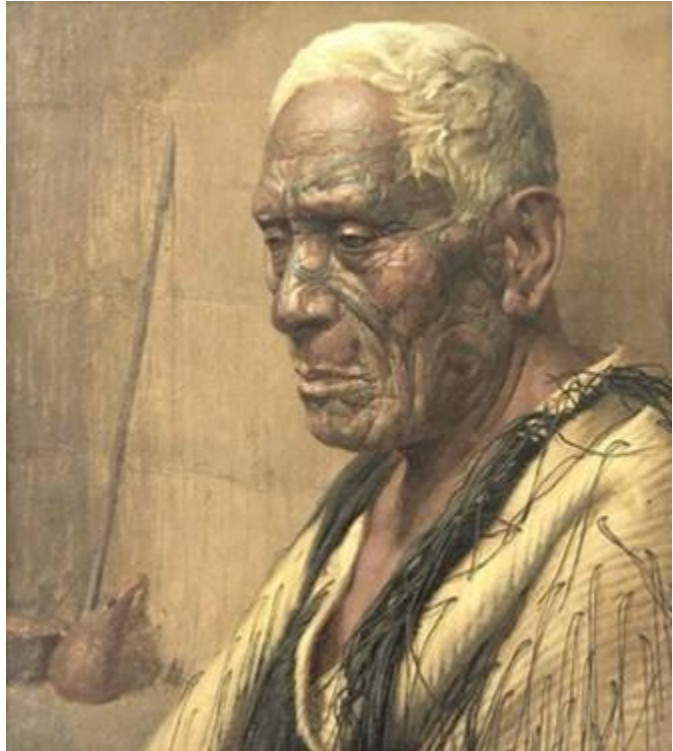
At that time, paintings by Goldie were generally made on canvas. The choice of a wooden panel as a support for these two works seems consistent with an outdoor execution, reflecting a parenthesis in Goldie's essentially academic career, during which the artist wanted to try the naturalist approach, which had been practiced in the Fontainebleau area.<sup>3</sup>

Towards the end of his stay in France, Goldie expressed a desire to return to New Zealand and create an art school modeled on the Académie Julian. Back in Auckland

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<sup>3</sup> Personal communication from Jane Davidson-Ladd, University of Auckland – Faculty of Arts  
<https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/arts/about-the-faculty.html>

in 1898, he shared a studio with Steele, his former teacher, where they hosted an educational institution, which they called the French Academy of Fine Arts. However shortly thereafter, tensions arose between the two partners, who separated, an event that became the cornerstone of Goldie's career.



At this time, he decided to concentrate on the subject that would become his artistic signature, namely portraits of the Maori, an indigenous people in sharp demographic decline. In doing so, Goldie befriended many Maori chiefs, lived with them and even learned to speak their language, with the determination to help preserve their culture. There is little doubt that his time in Marlotte was then only a distant memory!

*Kamariera Te Hau Takiri Wharepapa*, par  
Charles-Frederick Goldie (1907-1931)

These iconic portraits immediately enjoyed immense success and their appreciation has only increased since then, as evidenced by the recent sale price of \$1,800,000 for the portrait reproduced opposite (created over a very long period of time, from 1907 to 1931).

His health deteriorating, possibly as a result of lead poisoning from the pigments he used to prepare his canvases, Charles Frederick Goldie stopped painting completely in 1941. He died on July 11, 1947, at the age of 76 years old, and is buried in Auckland.