



George Valentine. The Porridge Pot, Lake Rotomahana. 1885 Photograph, 18.9 x 29cm. Auckland Institute and Museum

motivated his painstaking field work of January 1885, the replicas both before and after the eruption promote a nostalgic vision of Rotomahana in its 'native purity', uncontaminated by tourism.

The selective nature of Blomfield's 'truth' can likewise be seen in his ability, in the midst of forestry's devastating progress, to find remnants of sylvan bush in which to sketch. His researches into the picturesque, fairly typical of his time, do not necessarily mean that Blomfield was blind to nature's essential fragility, to the real changes that were so typical of his time. Long after the cataclysmic eruption, he wrote the following account of how tourism inevitably transformed the landscape:

Rotomahana was unique. There was never anything like it before, and will never be again. It was beginning to be known as one of the sights of the world. The number of tourists visiting it doubled every few months. Soon the Government would have taken control and then all kinds of incongruous 'improvements' would have been introduced. The Maoris may have control of a beauty spot for years without altering its natural aspects, but as soon as the European steps in it soon loses its native purity. They form shell paths and build trim shelters at Whakarewarewa, turn the slopes of Ruapehu into a Scotch Highlands, and make a hideous wilderness of many a fine stretch of bush. One dreads to think of what Rotomahana would have looked like with shelters, tea kiosks, signboards, steam launches and perhaps a big hotel just where I pitched my tent.¹³

Nevertheless, tourism remained the context for Blomfield's terrace-replica business. His 'Gallery of New Zealand Art' in the Victoria Arcade lay between the wharves and the hotels, and adver-