

news

FROM THE
CANTERBURY
SOCIETY
OF ARTS

NUMBER FOUR NOVEMBER 1965



This exhibition now touring New Zealand has been arranged by the Auckland City Art Gallery under the sponsorship of the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council. We have much pleasure in announcing its display here in the Art Society's Gallery from November 20th until 12th December.

Where the exhibition of Contemporary British Sculpture shown in the McDougall Art Gallery emphasised a significant break with past forms there is less evidence of this in the work of these Italians and the persistence of the humanist vein in many of the bronzes indicates the enduring influence of the great sculptural heritage of Italy. It is possible that transport difficulties have excluded carved works from this exhibition, nonetheless Viani who is noted for his superb marbles, is represented by a work in iron. The energy of the futurists continues in the bronzes of Cagli and Somaini and there is a reminder of the narrative leanings of many Italian artists in the fascist period works by Martini. Also included are pieces by such well known artists as Manzu, Marini and Emilio Greco. Here then are thirty sculptures in bronze, iron and lead, typical of the rich inventiveness and lyric power of the contemporary Italian sculptor, forming one of the most important exhibitions we have had the pleasure to present in Christchurch. The exhibition is to be mounted with the assistance of members of "20/20".

CONTEMPORARY ITALIAN SCULPTURE EXHIBITION

OPENING
SATURDAY
20 NOVEMBER, 8 P.M.

THE JOURNAL OF THE CANTERBURY SOCIETY OF
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Photograph above 'Anna' 1962 by Emilio Greco.

OPEN FORUM: THE KELLIHER PRIZE— ONE POINT OF VIEW

Mr W. A. Sutton writes:

THOUGHTS ON THE KELLIHER PRIZE, AND ITS POSITION IN PAINTING

"... Painting for which we must be endowed with both imagination and skill in the hand, to discover unseen things concealed beneath the obscurity of natural objects, and to arrest them with the hand, presenting to the sight that which did not before appear to exist!"

—Cennino Cennini, circa A.D. 1437.

"Painting of this sort I liken to a dumb blonde—easy on the eye, and it don't strain the mind."

—anon. 1965.

Many members of the Canterbury Society of Arts have expressed surprise at criticism of the Kelliher Prize for landscape painting and what it stands for, by artists and others who are held high in public esteem.

The cause of such criticism is inherent in the regulations governing the award of the prize, these being so framed as to restrict submissions to representational or imitative styles of painting—referred to by Andre Lhote so succinctly, "The representational element, that is, the part that does not contribute to the structure of the picture." In consequence paintings run the risk of being disqualified if they are not copies from nature.

On looking through the whole known history of painting, we find that whether the representational element is present or not in greater or lesser quantity, the structural, organic conventions peculiar to painting are always present. Without them, great or even good painting is impossible. The rules of the Kelliher Prize are devised to almost entirely exclude them. A painter who is aware of the all-pervading nature of these qualities in painting has a chance of success in the competition only by tricking out the framework of his constructed painting with such technical ephemera as will disguise it sufficiently to let it pass muster as a painting "done from nature".

In imitative painting, once the necessary skills have been acquired, the problems involved are minor ones. The painter records what he sees in front of him at a given time, often in terms of a fashionably showy technique; and within the range of subject-matter he specialises in, a high degree of competence can be achieved and maintained over a long period; and we discover painters who are prolific, producing literally hundreds of works of approximately equal merit. In the competition where comparable degrees of skill are demonstrated by different painters, the preference must of necessity lie in whether the judge likes one original piece of scenery better than another.

A fine view does not necessarily make a fine painting. They are very different kettles of fish. A copy in paint of a fine piece of scenery has as its only recommendation, apart from the possible charm of deftly-handled paint, an evocation of the memory of the original scene, or a desire on the part of a stranger to visit the place depicted. The emotions aroused in consequence are aroused not by the picture itself but by the splendours of the natural phenomena of which the picture reminds the observer. "What a beautiful view," we say, not "what a beautiful painting". An equally skilful recording of an indifferent piece of countryside would arouse little interest in the observer. Nor would it qualify for an award.

As an aside, this confusion of ideas can have some amusing results. I well remember the disgust of some City Councillors a few years ago when a painting of dustbins by John Weeks was recommended by a committee of artists for purchase by the city. Councillors were unable to grasp that a fine painting can be evolved from commonplace subject-matter. No such

misgivings have been shown in accepting indifferent pictures in more glamorous themes.

So-called "composition" in naturalistic or imitative painting consists entirely of improving on nature (if the landscape is not laid out to the artist's taste) by adjusting the components until a more balanced display on the canvas surface is achieved, and then the artist paints an imitation of what the original scene would have looked like, had the ingredients been so arranged. This is not painting, but rather landscape gardening done in paint.

For competition purposes the painting must not be too crowded, but comfortably full, not allowing any ingredient to take up more than its fair share of space; not too strong in colour or it may run the risk of being considered unnaturalistic and so liable for disqualification; nor yet too gentle in colour or its voice may not be heard; not too unusual in choice of theme (only the bravest venture to use subject-matter outside that which is established by custom as being suitable for competitions). Almost all candidates, not to be outdone on one score, work to the maximum size of canvas permitted, and to an almost fixed proportion of length versus breadth. A few competitions ago a Nelson candidate was singled out by the art critic of the Evening Post for a slightly disparaging mention, for exhibiting a canvas that was wider in relationship to its height than the other entries. This defect did not, however, prevent a discerning judge from giving it an award.

I have been assured by responsible friends in Wellington that the solid phalanx of competition landscapes dressed in their Sunday best and ranged like the interminable delta-minus twins is Brave New World, is the most terrifying sight they have ever seen, in New Zealand or abroad; and it takes a person of intrepid virtue to survive this onslaught of organised art, with the fanfares, beano in full regalia, and the newspapers full of nothing else for a week dividing their time between admiring the art and listing the distinguished guests. One of the major problems of the sponsors must consist in securing the services of an overseas judge who can endure such as ordeal and not immediately flee the gallery and the country.

It is worth noting that not one award-winning painting in any Kelliher competition has been selected for any official exhibition of New Zealand painting to tour abroad—Russia, Paris, London, Australia or Japan.

Competitions which by intention or mischance are so organised as to eliminate as far as possible an original line of research and invention in the artist are like weeds after hormone treatment. They flourish outrageously for a time, then fall exhausted to the ground and perish.

Because of limited space I must perhaps oversimplify a complex issue in the next point of my argument.

In the problem of translating three dimensions to a two-dimensional surface, a painter has three main solutions to offer. 1. To copy exactly that he sees before him; 2. To invent an explanation in painterly terms to describe mass and recession; 3. To ignore the business entirely as being unnecessary in his conception of the painting. Let us briefly consider the first two points. The copyist can present the visual appearance so scrupulously that the third dimension is automatically supplied by the spectator. In this method, painters often wait until the subject-matter before them is so lit by the sun that shadows suggest

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ACCESS TO THE HIGH COUNTRY

When changes occur there seems to be a time lag before such changes are fully realised. The high country, back country roads have changed considerably in recent years. There is a far greater amount of sealing on the road surfaces, widening and bridging, and well defined tracks go to much greater heights.

The chances therefore, of the artist to take his work, and the harassed city man to re-orientate and revitalise his inner being, are here to hand.

In the short time of an hour and a half anyone can be in the Oxford bush, on the summit road on the Peninsula or at 3000ft. or more on Porters Pass. In three hours Arthurs Pass is there for the asking, or the end of the side road leading from Cass to Mt. White or Avoca. In not much more time anyone can come within range of the Lewis Pass, the Erewhon country via Mt. Somers and on to the north bank of the Rangitata. Take such a place as Erewhon. The main divide of the Alps, glaciers and all, are only 16 miles from the end of the road, the country, riverbed and mountain have a beauty in world class. Such places are never over-crowded as in Europe and elsewhere. With modern cars and modern roads we have a key to magic places and how few use it.

The tracks to the greater heights are even more exciting. All the ski clubs near Christchurch, whether the Amuri Club beyond Jacks Pass at Hanmer, or the several clubs in the Craigieburn ranges have access roads leading to wonderful views to be enjoyed by those who because of age can no longer climb far. All for the asking.

Paul Pascoe

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members who have joined the Society since the last News was published.

Mrs B. D. Aitken	Miss Penelope Kellock
Dr D. A. Andrews	Mrs M. E. Moss
Miss D. C. Bates	Mr T. J. McCarthy
Mr A. E. Beal	Mr T. MacKenzie
Mr A. O. Brinkman	Mrs P. J. Panckhurst
Miss J. M. Campbell	Mrs J. H. Parsonson
Miss J. M. Campbell	Mr John B. Pearson
Mrs J. C. M. Coté	Mrs E. J. Petersen
Mr Tony Cullingford	Mr F. J. Renwick
Miss B. J. De Lambert	Miss Lindsay Shaw
Mrs Mona Dean	Mr D. C. Sheppard
Mrs Beryl D. Ernst	Mrs Barbara Smith
Mrs K. J. Ford	Mr D. V. Smith
Mrs R. G. Glubb	Mrs Margaret J. Smith
Mrs M. Gordon-Smith	Mr George Stringer
Mrs E. W. Harman	Mrs M. B. Warren
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SOME NOTES ON OUR EXHIBITIONS

The main function of our Society is to give members the opportunity of exhibiting their work, but, with the wider public interest in the arts during recent years, and an ever growing membership, the problem of doing this to everyone's satisfaction becomes increasingly difficult. Entries in the Annual Autumn Exhibition for Full Working Members have had to be curtailed with the result that many of our artists can only be presented by one painting. Standards for admission to full Working Membership should therefore be raised in order to achieve the highest possible standard of work for this exhibition. To ease the pressure the Council has inaugurated two new ways for members to exhibit.

A. Full Working Members who do not care to be involved in the heavy expense of mounting a One Man Show on their own now have the opportunity of exhibiting their work in what we call a "Combined One-Man-Show". Paying a nominal rent for wall space they can exhibit as many works as they please. The Society pays all other outgoing expenses such as invitations, opening expenses, lighting, heating and advertising, and these are considerable. The exhibitions held last year and this, met with the approval of all members and in every way have been an unqualified success. Visitors and members have thus been able to assess the stature of the exhibitions' painters by the range of work shown, and sales have been good. It was also interesting to note the tremendous improvement in the work of those who exhibited in both exhibitions. This of course resulted from the added incentive these artists have been given to work towards the goal of an exhibition without any serious restrictions. If more of our working members availed themselves of this excellent scheme at least two such exhibitions should be possible each year, perhaps even more.

B. For Associate Members the Spring Exhibition has become an annual fixture and proves well worth while. Any member of the Society may exhibit in this exhibition and have at least one picture hung. It caters for beginners and those whose work may not be up to the standard set for Full Working Membership. However, Associate Members may apply for Working Membership by submitting a group of four paintings plus drawings at the time of the Annual Autumn Exhibition and their election will be considered by the Council.

The recent Spring Exhibition had its weaknesses, one being that all entries were hung this year, and this lowered the all-over standard of the work shown. The Council realises this weakness and the whole matter of the Spring Exhibition is under review. It is more than likely that in future a careful selection will be made so that a higher all over standard can be arrived at, though of course, except in very special circumstances each exhibitor will always retain the right of exhibiting at least one work.

John Oakley.



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OPEN FORUM: THE KELLIHER PRIZE— A SECOND POINT OF VIEW

Mr Paul Pascoe writes:—

I understand that Mr W. A. Sutton has written his views on the need for reform in the conditions of the Kelliher Award. I admire Mr Sutton as one of the best artists who has lived in Canterbury, certainly one of the most versatile, and it goes without saying that I respect his views accordingly.

I would however, wish to present my own view. True, I am not an artist, true I do not have the knowledge that artists have, true also that my own view may be valid.

This view is not to be against abstract art, so called. I am very much for it. It is, however, necessary to say a word in favour also for what is called the realist view. I do not care for photographic representations—the old form of epigram "Art lies in concealing Art". I do however care for our beautiful scenery to be recognisable as such.

The Kelliher Prize Award this year, "Head of Lake Wakatipu" by Douglas Badcock, was reproduced in the September issue of the N.Z. Weekly News. I wrote to Auckland for copies of this issue and was informed that the picture was to be printed separately and was to be on sale accordingly. I have sent away for four copies to send to friends, some overseas, for Christmas. Why? Not because this picture is too representational. Not because it is too accurate in the objective sense, but because it is accurate in the subjective sense. The scene has an under-the-surface appreciation of the beauty, the mystery, the magic of our lakes and mountains. Is this not a legacy to leave our successors? Is this not another very real achievement in the art of our time? If a man has a large family and he is wise he appreciates all the personalities of his children, however different. The personalities of artistic achievement are most varied, there should be room for appreciation of all aspects of all kinds.

Paul Pascoe.

GALLERY PROGRAMME

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: Wednesday, 17th November, 8 p.m.

ITALIAN SCULPTURE EXHIBITION: Saturday, 20th November to Sunday, 12th December.

BUCK NIN—ONE-MAN SHOW—PAINTINGS: 1st December to 12th December.

CHRISTCHURCH MINERAL AND LAPIDARY CLUB (INC.): Saturday, 18th December. Exhibition of work of members. Tumbled stones and jewellery. Working models of machinery.

ANNUAL AUTUMN EXHIBITION: Opening Saturday 12th March to 3rd April.

TOWN AND COUNTRY ART CLUB EXHIBITION: 13th to 24th April.

SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS EXHIBITION: 28th April to 6th May.

W. A. Sutton, 11/9/65.

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NEWS FOR WORKING MEMBERS AND ASSOCIATE WORKING MEMBERS

ANNUAL AUTUMN EXHIBITION 1966

Opening: Saturday, 12th March.

Closing: Sunday, 3rd April.

Receiving: 14th and 15 February between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Entry forms will be posted out with the January issue of the News.

Associate Working Members wishing to apply for full working membership are advised that entry forms will be available from the Secretary's Office from Wednesday, 2nd February, 1966.

SPRING EXHIBITION

FOR ASSOCIATE WORKING MEMBERS:

Tentative Date: Saturday, 10th September.

A PAINTING GLOSSARY

ABSTRACT ART—Not representational.

ACTION PAINTING—Applying paint in an unconventional manner (i.e. dribbling from a can etc.).

ART NOUVEAU—New art, free from past traditions.

BAROQUE—Art which uses striking and strong contrasts, odd, over-lavish.

COLLAGE—Using pieces of paper, cloth, newspaper, etc., to form a picture or part of a picture.

CONTEMPORARY—Produced in this generation.

CUBISM—Reduction of natural shapes to a geometric basis (Picasso).

DADA—An early 20th Century movement which endeavoured to undermine academic art.

EXPRESSIONISM—Art which aims to reveal the painters emotions.

FUTURISM—An artist's work which adds motion to Cubism.

GENRE—Realistic art. Scenes from everyday life.

GOUACHE—Watercolour thickened and made opaque with white paint.

IMPRESSIONISM—A style of painting in which artists painted the effect of natural light with bright colours (Monet, Renoir and others).

MEDIUM—The manner and materials used by an artist to express himself (i.e. oil, watercolour, canvas, hardboard).

NON-OBJECTIVE ART—The use of abstract forms as a means of expression.

PLEIN AIR—Open air. Painting executed outdoors giving the impression of open air.

POST IMPRESSIONISM—Reaction against the painting of the Impressionists to produce a more substantial form of art (Cezanne, Van Gogh).

PRIMITIVE—Painting in the manner of untaught artists. (Rousseau, Grandma Moses).

REALISM—Lifelike imitation.

RENAISSANCE—Rebirth, revival of classic ideals (Da Vinci, Michelangelo).

SURREALISM—Super-realism or beyond realism. The dream world. Painting which endeavours to represent the imagination or dreams (Miro, Dali).

TEMPERA—Pigment mixed with egg.

THREE DIMENSIONAL—Representational art which depicts deep space (Dali).

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