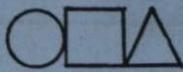


news

NUMBER TWELVE, MARCH 1967



THE JOURNAL OF
THE CANTERBURY SOCIETY OF ARTS
CNR DURHAM AND ARMAGH STREETS
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CHRISTCHURCH
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Children at work. Mr Derek Mitchell assisting the juniors at the Saturday morning art classes the society conducts.—Orly.

CHILDREN LEARN AMID THE ART WORKS WE EXHIBIT

An interesting aspect of the society's activities, and one which has been established for some years, is the junior art classes which are conducted at the Gallery in Durham Street each Saturday morning.

The classes are conducted by Mr Ray Mitchell, who takes the seniors, and Mr Derek Mitchell, children of primary school age.

The classes extend over three terms of the year, each of twelve weeks, and fees are either £4 10s a term (7s 6d a lesson) or, if paid by the lesson, 8s a lesson.

For children of society members the fee is £3 15s a term.

The children pictured in this issue, on a recent Saturday morning, were actually working amid the Manawatu art prize show.

As exhibitions come and go in the gallery, the children can gain considerably from their surroundings.

As Mr Ray Mitchell said of his senior pupils: "Having paintings around like this is of great benefit. I often use paintings here as examples.

"At this age (secondary school) they are quite sophisticated and I try to form a link with this work and what they see all around them."

Certainly they will never grow up to be in awe, or awkward, in art galleries.

TO OPEN AUTUMN SHOW

Mr J. D. Charlton Edgar, Director of the Dunedin Art Gallery, has kindly accepted our invitation to open the Annual Autumn Exhibition on April 1.

Mr Charlton Edgar is a well known and highly respected figure in New Zealand's art world, and the gallery he controls is one of the nation's best.

SEEKING MELBOURNE EXHIBITION

The Society has applied to the National Gallery of Victoria for the exhibition of thirty paintings by modern European artists which is to be an Auckland Festival attraction this year.

It is said to be an exciting and stimulating exhibition, and we seem to have a reasonable chance of securing it.

The Victorian Gallery's Director and Assistant-Director are agreeable to our request, but the Gallery Trustees have yet to consider it, some time this month. If they agree, we will exhibit in June-July.

Seeking out loan exhibitions for ourselves in this way is something the Society should develop.

It is what our new gallery — for which we hope to call tenders this month — will deserve.

Australia, after all, is not really very far away, and it is certainly the scene of diverse and stimulating artistic activity.

WHAT'S DIFFERENT ABOUT NEW ZEALAND ART?

This is the first of a series of three articles by Mr P. A. Tomory.

They first appeared in the "Listener" in 1964, and we are indebted both to the Editor of the "Listener" (Mr M. H. Holcroft) and to Mr Tomory for permission to use them.

Mr Tomory, former Director of the Auckland City Art Gallery and now senior lecturer in art history at the Elam School of Art, is recipient of the Society's Silver Medal for his lively and vigorous services to art in New Zealand.

The presentation will be made at our Autumn Exhibition.

I've always been against snap judgments where you name, say, the five leading artists in New Zealand. This is quite easy to do, but it is very much a personal opinion. Even someone like myself who has been in the game for 15 years and looks at pictures all day long — in the end I rely a bit on my personal taste. While I can grant a particular artist's position as a serious artist, his works may not particularly move me. They might move somebody else.

This is a problem right through the world. A number of exhibitions have been held recently in Europe, where the idea has been to show the "top art" of the contemporary scene. In each case these exhibitions have fallen down, in the opinion of one critic or another, because they reflect so much the particular taste of those selecting.

As an example, consider two artists in New Zealand who are of an age — a painting age — although there are 10 years between them. They are Woollaston and McCahon. I showed slides of both these artists overseas and the one who appealed immediately to the average European was Woollaston. His whole style, the way he rearranges his landscape, the way he paints it, is an international style, in fact he doesn't create an image out of the landscape; he paints an expression of the landscape through himself. He is an expressionist, but he doesn't produce a kind of image which ties his painting to a particular region.

McCahon, on the other hand, is very much more inventive. Out of the landscapes he sees he creates definite images which belong to New Zealand and are much more readily interpreted by a perceptive New Zealander than by somebody abroad. The Europeans were all impressed by McCahon's painting, but their comments showed that Woollaston was the painter they could understand most easily. On the other hand they granted that McCahon was probably the more fundamental painter creating the more deeply felt image, stripping down what he sees into a basic philosophy, an attitude to life within New Zealand. The whole way he paints has what you might call New Zealand-isms about it.

So I think we have now a similar cross-section to that of any other country. In the United States, for instance, there are persons about whom you can say, "These are American painters." Others you are not quite so sure about because their styles are international. They could be other than American.

But I remember seeing a big exhibition in Dusseldorf, Germany, in which one room was set aside for American painting. There was no missing it. You walked in and without having to look at labels or anything else you thought, "Well here we are." There were Motherwell and Pollock and so on, and it stuck out a mile as American. It could not have been any other sort of painting.

I disputed with Herbert Read when he was here about this very thing. He was saying that the regional aspect of art is almost done for. I disagree profoundly. I think you can even tell West Coast American painting from East Coast. You certainly can tell American abstract expressionism from the European variety.

It's difficult to say what these differing characteristics are for New Zealand because they are literally painted into the picture. There are certain ways of applying paint to canvas or hard-board by which you detect a particular artistic style. It's like hand writing. You can tell a Rembrandt from a Rubens without looking at the whole painting. You just look at three or four square inches. And you can actually say whether it's a Flemish or a Dutch painting, whether it belongs to the north or to the south.

So if you are looking for regional characteristics you look at the paintwork, rather than the subject or any other more literary implication. What I think is general here, as well as in Australian painting and a bit of American painting, is a conscious rejection of European subtlety in painting. We all know how the French work; they have a highly sophisticated application of paint. And this applies in the other Mediterranean countries, whose painters are working in a long tradition where refinements have been carried out over centuries.

Many of our customs here are not European, although we may say they are. They are coloured by a colonial background. Anything sophisticated we tend to regard effete. I think that in the ex-colonial countries there is a conscious rejection, in all forms of life, of the mother country's habits. I suppose it is a move towards a kind of national identity. In painting, this comes out as a revolt against sophisticated arrangements of brush-strokes. You can almost use the word "brutal." There is a "brutal" application of paint. New Zealand painting in this way is closer to the American than to any European kind, although we have some artists who are more sophisticated than others.

Apart from the question of brushwork, there is of course the light — the natural element which affects all painting anywhere. The light is very important because this is what affects colour, and here the difference between New Zealand painting and European painting is startling. In the same way, Australian painting differs because the light is absorbed by a whole continent and its quality is unlike that in New Zealand which has thousands of miles of ocean round it.

The light here is intense; it tends to turn everything into black and white. You find this especially in the north, but in the high summer even the hills around Wellington have a very clear black-and-white kind of cutting edge. It's often not till the early evening, when the sun has almost gone down, that you see all the forms coming up in the full tonal range. And a typical Canterbury scene in high summer is a black macrocarpa against dun or yellow-coloured burnt-out grass hills. This is a thing we all know about; it can be seen even when flying — this black and white contrast.

Australia might be expected to be similar, but it has a lot of haze in the air and a lot of dust. The nearest country I know to New Zealand is Greece, which is also very much surrounded by water and has this bright, intense light. In fact, flying in to Greece once from Egypt, and looking down, it was like going into Queen Charlotte Sound. There was an extraordinary similarity in the land forms and also in their appearance.

It has taken a long time for this light to emerge in New Zealand painting. You can achieve a kind of colour-film transcription, as many popular

painters have done. It has all been boiled up — like what Pevsner called the "boiled sweet" colours of houses in New Zealand suburbs. This painting is not a true representation of a country of which the form is exciting, but the colour monochrome.

Perhaps in the South Island in the autumn you get bigger contrasts in foliage, but even the bush, particularly in early summer, offers only an enormous variation of densities of green, or green to green-brown or green-yellow. The range of colours isn't very extensive anywhere in New Zealand.

One lives off the **shapes** of the country, which is volcanic and has enormous folds and extraordinary erupted land forms. They carry either grass or bush, but there's no great variety in terms of colour. This is not necessarily less exciting or impressive for the artist, and it is the truth of the matter. The forms are what most of the serious painters have seized on. McCahon in his landscapes, Don Binney, Rita Angus, all their works have been on the formal aspect, rather than trying to invent a colour vocabulary.

In New Zealand, of course, there is hardly what one could call an abstract painter. One of the few would be Don Peebles in Wellington. The rest work from the landscape or the townscape or something of that kind. The visually recorded thing in their minds is discernible in their painting. Some of their work may appear to the layman abstract, but really is not at all.

New Zealand is now in a position, however, where the landscape is not playing so great a part. The town is beginning to make its impression and a large number of artists are now concerned with urban subjects. I am not thinking of portraits, but of the kind of image which any kind of urban living sets up. The artists are concerned with the future in some aspect. An example is a young painter, Tim Garrity, who is overseas at the moment but is coming back. He paints a cosmological kind of subject, and this is the result of an urban society, not a rural one. He is not exceptional in this. A number of other young artists have been trying to get to grips with the stresses and strains which a closely-packed urban living produces. They are investigating the human condition.

(to be continued)

ONE-MAN SHOWS

Two Working Members of the society, Rudolf Gopas and D. C. Peebles, will be giving one-man shows in Auckland as part of its Festival offering in May.

HONOURED

Two of our members were included in Her Majesty's New Year Honours list.

Bishop A. K. Warren was recipient of the C.M.G. and Cr Harold P. Smith the O.B.E.

KEEP YOUR INVITATION

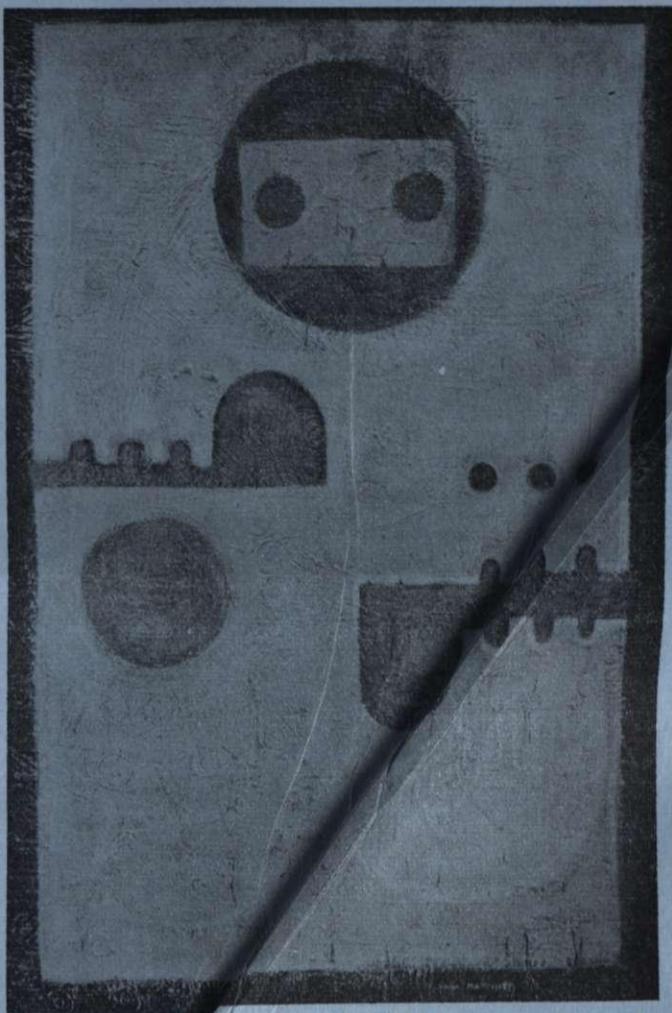
Do not throw away your invitation to the Annual Autumn Exhibition. It has a number on it, and this is your stake in the society's annual Art Union. The results of the draw will be announced at the opening of the Autumn show, so bring the invitation.

SEEKING A NOLAN

We hope to have, as a special exhibit at the Autumn Exhibition, the magnificent Sydney Nolan painting which the Dunedin Art Gallery possesses.

An approach has been made to the Gallery Trustees to see if our Society could borrow the work.

At press time the Trustees had still to meet to consider our request.



"Red-Headed Guit Player", P.V.A. by Para Matchitt, from the Manawatu prize exhibition.—Orly.

IN THE GALLERY NOW

The exhibition of drawings by working members of the Society will be on exhibition until March 13.

With it is a selection from the Society's permanent collection, in the South gallery.

The selection from the Manawatu Contemporary Art Prize had unfortunately to be dismantled on March 5 because of its Q.E. II Arts Council tour.

Exhibitions in sight at the moment for this year in the Durham Street Art Gallery, with approximate dates, are:

April 1-20: Annual Autumn Exhibition (Receiving Day, March 16).

May 20-June 4: Town and Country Show.

August 2-19: "Christchurch Star" Secondary Schools' Exhibition.

September 16-30: Associate Members' Exhibition (Receiving Day, September 6).

October 7-22: Combined Artists' Show.

October 25-November 12: Group Show.

November 25-December 10: Summer Show (Receiving Day, November 15).



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Rossiter, Mr Paul
Simpson, Mrs Caroline
Trolove, Mrs E. B.
Wesley-James, Mr C. A. G.
Westgarth, Mr J. N.
Wilson, Mrs K. J.

APPLICATION FOR FULL WORKING MEMBERSHIP

In order to avoid possible disappointment, it has been decided to make a change after the annual Autumn Exhibition in the procedure for Associate Working Members to apply for full Working Membership.

In future, the Artists' Selection Committee will invite Associate Working Members to apply.

The invitations will be based on the quality of work exhibited at the Associate Working Members' Exhibition, this year in the Gallery from September 16 to 30.

SIDNEY NOLAN

When the Australian Prime Minister (Mr Harold Holt) visited New Zealand in February, he presented to the Government a landscape painting "The Kimberleys" by the world famous Australian, Sidney Nolan.

At the Christchurch reception for Mr Holt he told the Society's President (Mr S. E. Mair) that this painting of the Kimberley Ranges in central Western Australia, was "rather hard for us to part with."

Mr Mair suggested to Mr Holyoake, our Prime Minister, and to Mr Holt, that the painting be publicly exhibited in the four main centres before it is finally hung — presumably in Wellington.

Mr Holyoake was immediately sympathetic to the proposal. The suggestion was confirmed by letter.

Consequently, we believe that Christchurch people will soon have the opportunity to see this Nolan, if only temporarily.

Sidney Nolan is represented in the permanent collection of both the Wellington and Dunedin galleries, but is not yet represented in the McDougall Gallery in Christchurch, nor, we believe, in any private collection here.

McDOUGALL GALLERY

The Robert McDougall Art Gallery is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on week days and from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Sundays, with the city's permanent collection on display.

Until March 14 — A Unesco exhibition, "The Art of Writing". This comprises fifty large panels, and covers not only writing and written communication in the old civilisations, but extends to the modern techniques of speed rotary newspaper and poster printing. An elaborate catalogue which reproduces the whole exhibition is available at 10/-. A simpler type-script guide is also available.



"Matapihi", an oil by Irene O'Neill from the Manawatu prize exhibition.—Orly.

"Gretel", by Olivia Spencer-Bower from the exhibition of drawings by Working Members.—"Ch.Ch. Star".



EXHIBITION OF DRAWINGS AND PRINTS

The exhibition of Drawings and Prints now showing in the south gallery is a new venture for the society, and is likely to become a permanent annual fixture. Our artist members are provided with another opportunity to display their work, and the public are able to see, enjoy and purchase original works of art which are less expensive than paintings.

Just where the division comes between a drawing and a painting, is difficult to say, and a number of the works shown could also be classified as paintings. On the other hand no such difficulty arises regarding prints, which, as their name implies, can be reproduced in such diverse processes as lithography, etching, lino-cutting, etc.

The prints in this exhibition are far outnumbered by the drawings in which a wide range of media has been used. Pencil, pen and ink, crayon and water colour are popular and often used in combinations. Newer media such as felt pen and ball point pen are also used effectively, and each has its own special quality.

The use of tinted paper, particularly in the portraits, adds variety and richness to the work not so easily achieved on a white ground.

Prints and drawings with their freshness and basic technical approach have a special appeal and are becoming increasingly popular among discerning collectors overseas.

With prices ranging from as low as 10s 6d there are many excellent bargains among the work shown.

—John Oakley

DISTANT EXHIBITIONS

Receiving day for the Nelson Suter Art Society's Autumn Exhibition is March 20.

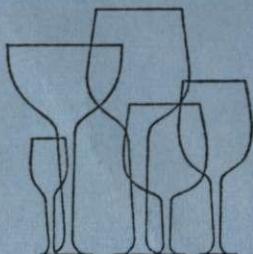
Receiving day for the Maori art competition in Wellington is March 29.

An exhibition of Peter McIntyre's work will open in the Dunedin Art Gallery, Logan Park, on April 8. Some of the paintings will be for sale.

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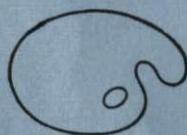


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NOTES FROM THE OFFICE

Artists who want space in the Combined Artists' Exhibition, from October 7 to 22, are asked to advise the office.

Space will be allocated on a "first come, first served" basis.

To bring it more into line with current costs and practice, the commission the Society charges on sales has been increased to 15 per cent.

ANNUAL N.Z. EXHIBITION

In this year's annual exhibition of contemporary New Zealand painting assembled by the Auckland Art Gallery — and probably to be seen in the McDougall later this year — the regions have the voice.

Instead of the Gallery selecting, four people in the main centres are selecting two major works from eight painters in their region.

John Coley, a Society Working Member, has made the Canterbury selection, being guided by his wish to show a fresh element in our regional painting.

He has chosen work from Rosemary Campbell, Susan Chaytor, David Graham, Vivian Lynn, Quentin MacFarlane, Trevor Moffitt, W. A. Sutton and Phillip Trustum.

FATHER OF POP ART

Works by the father of "pop" art, Marcel Duchamp, will be exhibited in Auckland during its Festival in May. They constitute a private collection, valued at more than £1,000,000, which is owned privately in New York and was exhibited recently in London's Tate, as a "retrospective" exhibition.

If you think "pop art" could not be all that retrospective, you will be fascinated to learn that Duchamp was doing things with bicycle wheels, bottle racks and cistern chains forty years ago.

As far back as 1913 Duchamp shocked New York with his now classic "Nude Descending a Staircase."

From then on his output was savagely generous until 1923, when he stopped. Just like that.

The answer is so simple it's almost bizarre. He took up chess and became so absorbed in it, he became one of the top players in the United States.

Since the modern art world went "pop", Duchamp has become a kind of cult and at the Tate he was a sell-out.

MEMBERSHIP

Our membership drive should shortly get a boost through the efforts of the Jaycees.

This alert group of civic-minded young men has agreed to help towards our new gallery by recruiting members for the society. In return, we are able to help them with their project at Ferrymead, the Museum of Transport.

It is a happy arrangement which will be of great benefit to the society.

Our thanks are due to the President of the Christchurch Jaycees (Mr Peter E. Grofski) and to the Chairman of their Civic Affairs Committee (Mr John Riminton).

Our aim is 500 more members this year, to give us a total of 1700 and greatly strengthen our finances.

MYSTERY

"It will probably always remain one of the mysteries of the artist's soul why artists, despite their habit of dealing with practically everything that stirs man's emotions and, besides, with such manifestations of nature as mountains, forests, the sea, and the weather, have paid so little attention to the Stock Exchange, although it cannot be denied that the latter is connected with one of the most important of human emotions." — from the Amsterdam-Rotterdam Bank "review."

AWARD

The C.S.A. - Guthrey Travel Award this year was awarded to a Working Member, Mr Quentin MacFarlane, whose work will be familiar to members.

Mr MacFarlane is not only one of Christchurch's outstanding young painters. He has, too, had experience in the selection and administration of exhibitions, has served as buyer for the society's permanent collection, and has been a council member.

He is a member of 20/20 Vision and The Group.

He intends to travel to Sydney and Melbourne, probably in August, to study painting — both Australian and that of the old masters — available in galleries in those centres.

Mr MacFarlane does not expect to accomplish everything at once. His main purpose, he says, will be to prepare the way for further visits.

Married with two children, he graduated in 1957 with honours in painting from the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts.

He is now a lecturer at Christchurch Teachers' College.

Mr MacFarlane has taught in secondary schools, at Paparua Prison, and for Adult Education.

Mr MacFarlane was second in the Hay's Art Competition in 1966 and has exhibited widely throughout New Zealand.

He had a one-man show in Christchurch last year. He exhibited at the Auckland City Art Gallery's Contemporary New Zealand Painting Exhibition and was chosen to exhibit in the 1963 Paris Biennale.

His work is represented in several galleries' collections.

The award, worth more than £100, is given jointly by the Society and Mr A. R. Guthrey to enable an artist or teacher to visit Australian galleries for study.

ACQUISITIONS

A water colour landscape by Eric Lee-Johnson and a painting by Rita Angus are the society's latest acquisitions for its permanent collection. These were bought from the personal collection of the late Russell Clark, a former prominent Working Member, which was exhibited for Mrs Clark in our gallery.

Her wish was that works sought for public exhibition should be sold at a reduced figure, and in fact almost all the twenty-five originals, and the quality prints, have gone to public exhibitions.

An excellent still life by John Weeks was bought for the Robert McDougall Gallery, as also was a Linley Richardson portrait of a Maori boy.

Other Christchurch purchasers were the Canterbury Public Library, Christchurch Teachers' College, and the Secondary Schools' Art Appreciation Organisation.

The McDougall Gallery has, too, gained a rare gift, a study by van der Velden "Girl Ferrying Sheep", which has come from Mrs H. J. Bacon of New Plymouth, in memory of her husband, Mr Harry Maryon Bacon.

The McDougall has also purchased a Nicholas Chevalier (1828 - 1902) — "Ti-trees and Creepers, Cape Schanck, Victoria."

VERSATILE

Art galleries need never be fusty places with purely static displays.

Consider the New York Gallery of Modern Art, for example.

It is paying tribute to film and stage star Ginger Rogers by screening full-length eleven of her films, together with a twelfth which comprises extracts from the best known of the eighty or so films Miss Rogers, now 55, has made in her thirty-six-year career.

Miss Rogers, by the way, was Dolly in "Hello Dolly" on Broadway up to the end of February.

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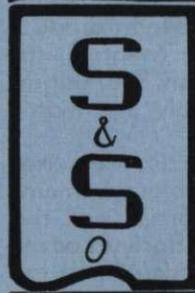
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GROWING UP!

We are, it seems, growing up as an active art nation.

Towards the end of last year an exhibition, "Eight New Zealand Artists" was shown in Sydney. After discussing each one briefly and rather light-heartedly, Helen Sweeney, regular art critic for the "Sunday Telegraph", commented that "the paintings were not as indigenous as expected.

"They have moved into pop, abstract, and target-type, at times timidly and a little self-consciously, and withall derivatively and soberly.

"New Zealand is apparently one of the emerging countries artistically. None show any Maori influence."

The last paragraph was the end of the notice, but to make sure of the message, the Sub-Editor had used 60 point upper case to say: "N.Z. Art, But No Maoris"!

1966 BLAKE PRIZE

Australia's \$1000 1966 Blake Prize for a religious painting was awarded to "ASCENSION", an abstract in sombre blues, greys and browns by the Sydney painter and playwright Rodney Milgate. The 8ft by 6ft painting is divided into two equal sections; in the lower section a writhing pattern of serpent-like convolutions moves up to the upper section where the design is repeated in reverse.

Mr Milgate says that he has been painting since he was 17, is now 32 and has also been a nightclub singer, television news reader and actor. His wife is the Sydney actress Dinah Shearing and they live in the northern Sydney seaside suburb of Newport with their two little boys.

Mr Milgate says that although he has recently had a one-man show in London, he has no desire to go abroad.

His play, "A Refined Look at Existence," is one of a series of Australian plays the Drama Foundation of the University of New South Wales began producing in October in its new Jane Street Theatre with the aid of a grant from the Gulbenkian Foundation of Lisbon. Mr Milgate says it is "simply one man's response to this crazy society."

Winner of the \$100 Darcy Morris Memorial Prize for a painting with a scriptural subject (a memorial to the late Father H. Darcy Morris) was the Sydney artist Ken Reinhard with "Five Barley Loaves and Two Small Fish". It is rather a work of pop art with Christ in profile holding, presumably, the objects of the title.

As in a diagrammatic advertisement an arrow points to the hands and under the arrow the word "Multitude" is painted in large sans-serif letters.

HELP FOR ITALY

Christchurch sculptor Ria Bancroft is not the only artist to give her own treasured work to help in the saving of flood damaged Italian works of art.

Pablo Picasso gave his "Femme Couchee Lisant" from his personal collection.

An auction on the truly grand scale — on TV, linking London, New York, Los Angeles and Dallas-Fort Worth — brought 105,000 dollars for the Italians. The purchaser was the Fort Worth Museum of Fine Arts.

Mrs Bancroft's beautiful little figure, "Seated Nude", which is on display in the gallery, has so far attracted over £80 in donations from members.

It is the Society's hope to have sufficient donated to purchase the work for the new gallery.

Mrs Bancroft, for her part, is sending the money to Florence.

news staff

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