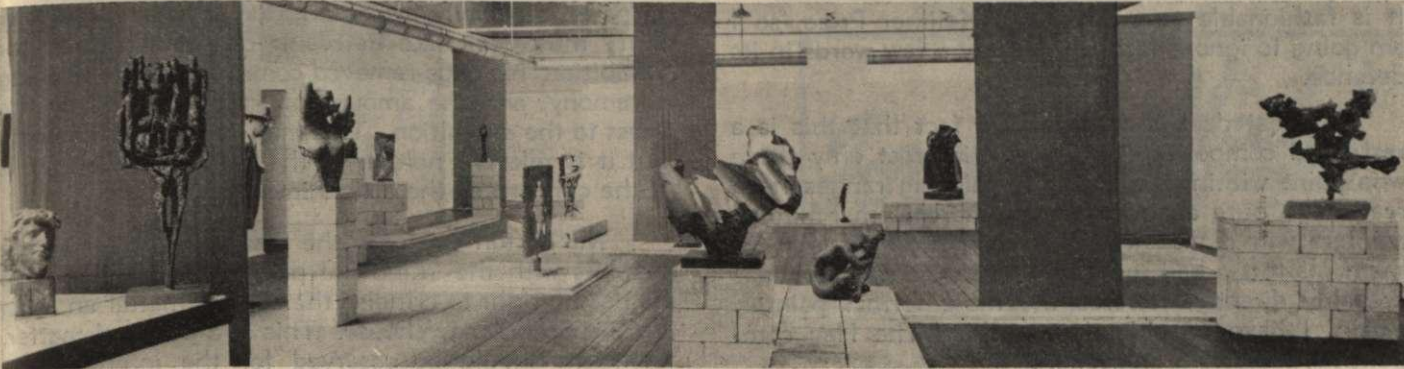


news

NUMBER FIVE JANUARY, 1966

THE JOURNAL OF
THE CANTERBURY SOCIETY OF ARTS
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The exhibition of contemporary Italian sculpture

This superb exhibition gave me intense pleasure. It was a unique assembly of works chosen with remarkable sympathy and understanding and representative of the foremost contemporary sculptors of a country renowned for its sculpture since the days of the Etruscans.

Few people perhaps realise how fortunate we were in being permitted to view such an exhibition which would have been an unusual event even in Italy itself. I was however surprised that, with such a tradition in the field of carved sculpture, there was only one carving included and this one had in fact as much a modelled as a carved feeling.

I am not carping at this lack of carved works but curious to know the reason which may have been partly due to the swing towards modelled and constructed work on the part of the sculptors or to the personal preferences of Professor Fortunato Bellonzi.

The civilised humanity about this assembly of works gave the exhibition a unity despite its magnificent variety. Persons with a sensitive understanding or feeling for three dimensional form derived great pleasure from contemplation of these sculptures but for those trained as sculptors it was possible to experience some of the love and satisfaction that the executant sculptors must have felt when producing them. It is an interesting experience and exercise to attempt this feeling into the other man's skin, and it is possible to do this, perhaps more readily with sculpture than other arts, particularly if one can feel or handle the work.

One sentence from Professor Bellonzi's catalogue introduction that particularly impressed me was "wherever the image of man fades as representation it survives as a problem or as a question mark." His choice of works for this exhibition fell perfectly within the limits of this quotation.

The young artists of the 20-20 Group who did the inspired job of mounting the exhibition have more than earned the free use of the gallery for their next exhibition.

Eric John Doudney

The above photograph was taken of the South Gallery during the recent exhibition of the Contemporary Italian Sculpture.

The Council is most grateful to the 20-20 Vision Group for so excellently arranging the Exhibition of Italian Sculpture. Many expressions of appreciation were made by visitors. The South Gallery has never looked better.

Gallery programme

Lecture by Mr G. Docking—

"The Public Gallery and the Public"

March 1st, at the Museum Lecture Theatre, 8 p.m

Annual Autumn Exhibition — Opening Night —
Saturday, 12th March, 1966.

Town and Country Art Club Exhibition —

Opening Night —

Tuesday, 12th April, 1966.

School of Fine Arts Exhibition —

28th April - 6th May, 1966.

New gallery

Sorry there isn't more news but this is to advise that our Architects are now busy with the plans and we hope to describe these in some detail in our March Issue of "News". We are grateful to the City Council for their recent co-operation with us in regard to our planning.

The Council of the Art Society proposes to hold another gift exhibition and sale next year (September 1st, 2nd, 3rd) to raise funds for the new gallery. We ask all members and friends to kindly help us in this matter by donating gifts for the sale and auction. It was found at our last gift exhibition that the following goods sold well:— Pictures, Silver, Bronze, Brass, Copper, China, Jewellery, Glass, Furniture and Books, etc.

The Council will set aside a storage room from now until the end of August for gifts so if you expect to be absent from New Zealand you may bring in gifts when you wish.

Open forum

The Kelliher prize

another point of view – Tolerance

It is fashionable to criticise the Kelliher Prize, so I am going to ignore fashion, and say a few words in its defence.

A great deal is made of the fact that this is a restricted competition which will interest only those who paint within one field. If painting ranges from realism to pure abstraction, the more formal-minded painters will realise that this competition is not for them. Is this a bad thing? A recent competition was probably directed towards the more formal painter. Again, I have no objection to this. The Hay competition, too, has a restriction.

The Conditions: What I do object to is ill-considered, often biased criticism of the Kelliher Prize conditions. These state that the prize is for oil paintings of New Zealand subjects, and that the object is to encourage artists to paint the beauty and essential character of the New Zealand scene, thereby to develop a livelier public appreciation, both of the fine arts of the infinitely varied aspects of our land. Surely the door is open here for the production of top quality work, the artist even being exhorted to seek out the essential character of the land, a clause which will deter no serious painter.

The conditions ask also for characteristic New Zealand subjects utilising the natural features of our landscape, with the activities of the people normally associated with them. This is a restriction so wide that it can limit only the specialist painter whose subject matter lies outside this vast field—the painter of still life, portrait or the abstract.

A little thought will reveal that a lengthy list of first class painters could be compiled, a large part of whose output falls within the framework of the competition. It would include such names as Girtin, Cox, de Wint, Cotman, Constable, Monet, Pissarro, Sisley, Corot, Courbet, Sickert, Grant, Steer and Spencer. These men all loved nature, drew their inspiration from it, interpreted it in their own way. Their work is far from abstraction, yet neither better nor worse for that. Cotman, a lover of pattern, was perhaps nearer to formal design than the others, but his work still delights us with its beautiful interpretations of nature.

The key word is **interpret**. Whether an artist's interpretation lies close to or far from nature, is a matter strictly personal to every painter. The artist should be judged by the quality of his work, not by whether he veers in the direction of realism or abstraction.

I can see no reason why we cannot enjoy good examples of all **types** of painting. The writer well remembers enjoying under one roof at Birmingham a strong Pre-Raphaelite collection, a memorial exhibition of work by George Stubbs, and an exhibition of still lives by Braque. A straight landscape painted with verve by Courbet delights me as much as a subtle evocation of a winter pond by Ivon Hitchens. The point is that we should accept limitations of period or outlook, enjoy a work for what it is, while we should not criticise it for what it does not set out to be, or for what we think it should be. The artificial sealing of art into watertight compartments shows a very superficial attitude.

W. A. Sutton's article makes good light reading

in parts, especially his description of what a Kelliher entry must look like before it can be accepted for exhibition, his once-removed comment on the opening ceremony, and the amount of space devoted by the press to the exhibition. This may make amusing copy, but it is relevant neither to the point at issue, nor is it the concern of the artists involved.

Mr Sutton confuses the quality of many of the exhibits with the "kind" of painting. I contend that he has no right to criticise the subject matter an artist (or a sponsor) may choose. This is a personal matter. Criticism should be reserved for the interpretation chosen and the quality of the resultant work. Mr Sutton gives a sound copybook discourse on painting, interpolated with such clichés as "translating into painterly terms" and "impinging through the eye on the intellect." All very learned and true, but all part of this barrier of words erected on all sides today between spectator and picture.

Warming to his subject, the writer continues by noting that no Kelliher painting has been selected for official exhibition abroad. The answer may be that an exhibition giving a true cross-section of the many styles of New Zealand painting is dependent on the liberal policy of the selection committee, on whether the doors are open to accept **good** examples of all types of painting, and on whether the net is cast far enough to reach to all corners of our country.

Finally, I refuse to believe that a good painting of a mountain is less worthy than an equally good painting of dustbins or geometrical shapes. Modern criticism tends to give the palm to **type** of painting, not quality of painting. It is strange to have to stress that a painting of something normally regarded as beautiful can still end up a fine picture, as worthy, indeed, as a picture with no obvious subject except its own pattern, form and colour. The cycle has gone full circle. Painters are being condemned because the subject matter that inspires them is not what the critics would like them to choose. Politicians would readily find a word for this treatment.

I feel it is time we dropped the superior attitude and got down to work in whatever style we feel to be sympathetic to us. Let us admit that there is equal merit in **good** landscape, **good** portrait or **good** abstract painting. The man who strides from one -ism to another may be a genius, but is often a bore, and is seldom as satisfying as the man who, like Braque, works quietly away in a more limited field. Finally, let us remember that to some people, to work with geometrical shapes and patterns without reference to subject matter is only a sterile mental exercise; to others the direct stimulus of subject matter is essential; to some, like Chagall, imagination alone is sufficient; while to another group the impetus lies somewhere in between these points of view. Surely all these and other outlooks are tenable, and justified by the results achieved.

C. V. Wheeler, 30.11.65

Mr Colin Wheeler, a working member of this Society, is a well known New Zealand artist and is represented in galleries throughout the country. He won the 2nd prize for watercolours in the last Hay Prize, is a 2nd prize winner in the Kelliher Competition and in 1964 he won the £500 National Bank Mural Award. He is Art Master at the Waitaki Boys' High School.

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Annual autumn exhibition

The Artists Sub Committee of the Council met to consider the regulations governing the Annual Autumn Exhibition in 1966. It was agreed that Working Members should be permitted to submit up to four works each for selection, and each member is entitled to have at least one picture hung. Members seeking election to full working membership should apply for entry forms to the Secretary and submit their work before the Annual Autumn Exhibition.

Attention is drawn to the regulation that work done in a class of instruction is NOT eligible for entry in any of the Society's exhibitions. The whole Council will act as Selection Committee. The attention of exhibitors is drawn to the Preview (for Artists only) of the Autumn Exhibition, at 5 p.m. the day before the Exhibition is opened.

New members

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

Mr P. J. Alley
Mrs E. E. Benfell
Miss Gladys E. Benton
Mrs J. D. Blair
Mrs C. D. Cunningham
Mr Alan Curwen
Mr H. R. Francis
Miss Maureen Frazer
Mrs Rosemary Greer
Mrs R. J. Leonard
Mrs Patricia S. Lill
Mr Clive Luscombe

Mrs Jocelyn May
Mr John Keith Reed
Mr L. J. Robinson
Mrs A. D. Shand
Mr W. D. H. Smith
Mrs A. R. M. Stewart
Mrs L. C. Thomson
Mr John Wilding
Re-joined
Miss Olivia Spencer-Bower
Returned from Overseas.

What do you think of "News"?

What do our members think of this publication? When it began, about three years ago it was printed type-writer style and issued at odd intervals and it wasn't much more than a list of coming events. The Council decided this wasn't good enough and thanks to our advertising revenue you now receive "News" regularly every second month in its present improved style and it is more interesting. We ask you to support our advertisers with your business.

From several places throughout New Zealand we have received compliments about "News" and requests for it. This is most encouraging but it is more important for our own members to read it, enjoy it, pass it on to others. If you have any ideas for the improvement of "News" or can send us contributions for publication, don't hesitate; they will be welcomed. We have 1000 or so members and Council feels it is most important that all are kept fully advised of what is going on. This is the important function of "News". Write to the Editor, Canterbury Society of Arts News, P.O. Box 772, Christchurch.

Art Competitions

The following art competitions will be held during 1966:

Hay's Ltd Art Competition, 1966 (for oils and water-colours).

Entry Forms 31st January, 1966.

Work to be submitted by 18th February, 1966.

Kelliher Prize (Oil Painting)

Entry Forms, 6th May, 1966.

Paintings, 8th June, 1966.

Dawson Hallmark watercolour art award, 1966.

Entries and receiving date 2nd February, 1966.

Rembrandt Art Competition (three sections, Figure and Portraiture, Interior Design, Landscape. Any medium).

Entry forms 18th March, 1966.

Paintings 25th March, 1966.

More Points of View

"As for technique, much as this may baffle the critic of abstract art, I would say that the standard is the same as in representational art. It is a question of the artist's skill in using his tools and materials to best advantage. There are badly painted abstract pictures just as there are badly painted representational pictures and there are well painted pictures of each kind." **Sir Herbert Read** in "A Letter to a Young Painter."

"There's a lot of good in abstract art. For one thing it has revolutionised design. At one time for instance, you could get wallpapers decorated only with naturalistic designs, such as roses. The abstract artist has liberated us from these restrictions. Make no mistake, some very clever young chaps are working more or less on abstract lines today." **Sir Hans Heysen**.

"Having a mural done is rather like having a baby. You don't know what you're going to get but when you've got it you have to learn to love it." **Elaine Haxton**. Her work is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and all Australian galleries.

"Surely nobody doubts that if a painting could be done which was an exact facsimile of nature it would no longer be a work of art—to be that it must have other elements. I agree with whoever it was that said —'Why try to repeat the universe? Isn't one of the damn things enough.' " **Arnold Shore**, late art critic for the Melbourne daily "The Age," and a working artist.

"A great deal of meaningless nonsense gets painted and even the people who paint it would be hard pressed to say what it's about. Much abstract work, even by Picasso, Kandinsky and others with big reputations was only like bad stained glass. Right down through history there has been a lot of bad painting and there always will be. To be opposed to abstract art, because much of it is bad seems to me to be unintelligent." **Arnold Shore**, late art critic for the Melbourne daily "The Age," and a working artist.

Keep This Date

Lecture by Mr G. Docking

Mr G. Docking who was recently appointed Director of the Auckland City Art Gallery and is the Judge of the 1966 Hay Prize has kindly agreed to give a lecture to members and friends in the **Museum Lecture Theatre on Tuesday, 1st March, 1966**. The title is to be "The Public Gallery and the Public." The subject will be illustrated by 35mm. slides and we are confident this will be well worth attending. **ADMISSION 2/- FOR NON-MEMBERS.**

The CSA-Guthrey travel award

In some ways this is one of the most imaginative and forward steps we have taken in recent years and it has been made possible only by the generosity of Councillor A. R. Guthrey who has donated the cost of a return air passage by Air-N.Z. to Australia to enable a Canterbury artist to visit the galleries and study in that country. Our Society has added £50 to cover the cost of travelling within Australia and the total value of the prize is therefore about £115. We are most grateful to Mr Guthrey. A panel of three persons, including his nominee will select the winner in February and applicants for the prize should apply immediately to the Secretary, Mrs Brooke, P.O. Box 772 for the Conditions of the Award. Australian Galleries offer magnificent opportunities. Not only are the internationally famous Australians (Dobell, Drysdale, Nolan, Boyd and others) well represented but Melbourne, for instance, has three Rembrandts, Titian, Tiepolo, Gainsboroughs, Constables and old masters and the more modern Europeans including the French Impressionists are in all the Australian National Galleries. On returning to New Zealand the winner will be required to report or write so that others may benefit. It is hoped to make the award an annual one.

New council members

We welcome Mr John Coley and Mr A. R. MacKay. Mr Coley is a Lecturer in Art at the Teachers Training College and is also a well known painter. In 1963/64 he was awarded a Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council Award and has travelled widely in the United States of America studying art education programmes in art galleries, schools and universities there.

Mr A. R. MacKay is a well known city businessman, principal of the Motor and Engineering Company, A. R. MacKay Ltd, and Past President of the Chamber of Commerce. He is also an amateur painter and recently showed his interest in visual art by commissioning Mr E. J. Doudney to execute a large mural for a wall of his new office.

The Council will be strengthened by the election of these two gentlemen.

Miss Ivy G. Fife

Miss Fife (Mrs Forrester) has given many years of hard loyal work to the Society and at the Annual Meeting on November 17th a vote of thanks and grateful appreciation was carried with acclamation for her continual interest in the Society. Council Members with whom she has worked hope that she will still be willing to assist with the many activities of the Society with which she is so well acquainted.

Annual meeting

After the formal business was concluded some interesting suggestions were made. Mrs Isobel Hall's recommendation that the rules be amended to provide that some Council Members stand down each year and be not eligible for re-election until a year or two thereafter was referred to the incoming Council for consideration. Mrs Hall had support for her idea from others present. Its purpose is to have an infusion of "new blood" in the Council each year. Mr Quentin Macfarlane proposed that the Council interest itself in the policy of the McDougall Art Gallery. This suggestion also had support, and like Mrs Hall's was referred to the new Council but one speaker pointed out that the Canterbury Society of Arts had plenty to do without being concerned with what happens elsewhere. The Treasurer, Mr Malcolm Ott and Mr Laidlaw referred to the important relationship of annual expenditure to income, and the need for additional funds to furnish the new gallery. Mrs Rona Fleming proposed another sale and auction of gifts from members and artists on the lines of the 1964 auction which raised £700. Mr Stewart Minson, in a most interesting 10-minute talk described plans for the New Gallery.

Silver medal award

Our third award of the medal for meritorious and distinguished service to visual art has been made to an artist, MR SYDNEY THOMPSON, O.B.E.

The Council and Society is delighted to recognise in this way one of Canterbury's and New Zealand's most distinguished artists whose work has delighted so many over a long period. Mr Thompson was born in Canterbury, has painted and studied in Australia, the United Kingdom and particularly in France and his work is clearly influenced by the School of French Impressionists. He is a New Zealand artist whose work will "live" to give pleasure for many years to many people. Previous awards of the medal have been to the "Christchurch Star" and to Sir James Hay.

Permanent collection gift

The Society sincerely thanks Mr R. R. Laidlaw for his generous gift of a painting oil on hardboard "Bush Landscape—Figure with Birds" by Susan Chaytor. This delightful painting is a valuable addition to our Collection and the Society is again indebted to Mr Laidlaw for this further evidence of his continued interest. "Figure with Birds" was on view in the North Gallery during the early part of the exhibition of Italian Sculpture. We hope many of you saw it.

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