

PAINT YOUR OWN PICTURES

Art at a Boys' College

IN last week's issue we published grown-up reactions to children's art. This week we obtained young people's impressions of the work of adult artists when we visited an Art and Drama exhibition staged at Scots College, Wellington, where 166 pictures representing the work of some of the best artists in the Dominion were on display. Typical of the impression made on the greater part of the school was one boy's remark: "I didn't know that New Zealand artists were so good—I thought they just did daub pictures."

Among the exhibits were two "problem pictures" which called forth varied comments. The first was a representation of an aquarium done in pastel shades in egg tempera. One boy professed to understand the work, many admired it for the colour and design, several thought that you got a faint idea of fishes if you looked at it from the distance, and one remarked that if you looked at it from one corner it appeared to be a duck with a large beak. The other was an impressionistic painting, entitled "Beethoven Sonata," which received the full blast of critical young minds. When asked what he thought of it, a Fourth Form lad rolled



NOT LIKE THIS—

his eyes, shrugged his shoulders and said, "It's a waste of oils. It reminds me of H. G. Wells." A Standard IV. boy evidently entered into the artist's subjective attitude, and remarked that it made him think of churned-up music.

Some Frank Criticism

Taken all round, the landscape section was the most popular part of the display, but the pictures which were most remembered and discussed were those intended to convey an idea or impression rather than a straight-out pictorial representation. The comment on a very large and elaborate lino-cut landscape was simple but to the point: "Gee, that must have taken a lot of bathroom floor!"

The boys were very frank in their criticism of the exhibition as a whole, one remarking that the authorities who came out to speak to them "cracked-up" the pictures that were by the most famous artists and tended to pass over those by lesser-known people which he

personally thought were just as good. Another, who apparently has the traditional idea about artists, said: "They're trying to make us all into chappies with long, flowing hair." A tiny chap of nine said that he liked the exhibition, but it wasn't good enough — they should have had some of the boys' painting, too.

In spite of the comments, however, the whole school was full of enthusiasm, and almost everyone, from the staff to the smallest pupil, had been inspired to try his hand at painting. The exhibition had appealed to different boys in different ways. To some it meant a break from routine classes; to some, rehearsals for the two plays which were presented on the evening that the exhibition was open to the public; to some, the technical preparations, including lighting, staging, hanging the pictures, and printing the catalogue on the school printing-press. But interest was centred mainly in the display and the talks: "How to Look at Pictures," "Composition and Design," "The Significance of New Zealand Art," and "Art as a Hobby."

Artist in Action

The demonstration of painting was one of the most popular features of the three days' activities. Perched on a cushion in the sun on the bottom step of the grandstand in the sports ground, the artist painted a landscape, explaining how and why as he went along, with comments that will be remembered after ordinary art classes have been forgotten: "A piece of soft rag is useful for lifting any surplus colour off, and don't absently-mindedly shove it in your pocket when you've finished or you're sure to pull it out in the tram on the way home, and people will think 'Poor chap, he can't afford a proper handkerchief.'" And "It



—BUT MORE LIKE THIS

is important to have the right amount of water on your brush. They'll all tell you not to lick your brush, but I know how much I want on the brush, and if I lick it I know how much has come off!"

He emphasised the fact that painting is not a mysterious art to be used only by the "gifted," but a straightforward, common-sense job that, like most things, needs a lot of practice. "If you want to learn painting, you may go to a teacher, but you will get the most fun out of it just puddling along on your own. But stick to the three primary colours, because the more colours you have, the more chance there is of making a mess."



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