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ART FOR **EVERYBODY**

A High School Experiment

N art-teaching scheme which may, in time, be used extensively in schools under the Education Department's jurisdiction, has been the subject of experiment for the last two or three years at primary schools in the Hutt Valley. Now, some of the work which has reached exhibition stage, is being displayed in the Wellington Public Library. This scheme is on the lines of "art activity for everybody," making it possible for any pupil, from the infant classes to the sixth form in Secondary School, to express himself or herself adequately in pencil and paint. Some of the work produced will be exhibited in the UNESCO Exhibition to be held in Paris in May of next year.

The exhibit of work from the Hutt Valley High School was arranged because it was considered to be of an exceptionally good type, and because the method of teaching used there is in line with the best modern educational development.

In schools of years ago art teaching was often focused only on pots, pans and vases; passing on, perhaps, to flowers, and then simple forms of architecture, with an occasional shipping scene for variety. Now the idea is to bridge the gap between the child and the adult painter by going straight into composition and allowing full play to each pupil's individual talent and expression. The works on display from the High



A semi-representational composition (Stage III) by Margaret Joyes, aged 17

leges in other centres for the benefit of teachers in the secondary and technical schools.

Starting at the Top

"This work, as you can see, is full of vitality and has an excellent sense of composition," said A. G. Tovey, Supervisor of Art and Craft for the Education Department, when he showed The Listener some of the samples. "The display is made up of some of the best and some of the average work, and I should like to make it clear that the whole art course is based on aesthetic experience and not technical ability.'

James B. Coe, art master at Hutt Valley High School, who has initiated School and contributing primary schools, and guided the experimental phases of

will later be sent to the training col- the scheme, told us that about 800 pupils were given one art lesson of 40 minutes a week, with a little extra time for some of the seniors. "We start at the top of the art scale—with composition—and work downwards," he said. "The result is excellent composition; and pupils of 12 to 19 years of age do as well as some of those in a senior art school."

He explained that the work went through a series of stages. Stage One was scribbling in pencil, from which designs were made and, in turn, used for fabric prints. Then came three-minute figure sketches from life. Stage Two was colour composition evolved from scribble drawing, and figure drawing from live models in halted movement, taking not longer than two minutes. The third stage was abstract composition and semi-representational composition, learning the use of colour not by theory, but by trial and error. Figure drawing was then done from slow movement, taking two to three minutes for the sketching. The fourth and last stage was the painting of static figures in six minutes. For this, no preliminary drawing was done; the student started straight away with the brush.

Aesthetic Experience Counts Most

One of the works on exhibition is a city street scene at Lower Hutt on a Friday night. All the pupils were taken in batches to try their hand at this subject. Another, by a boy of 18 years, is a 5ft. by 3ft. canvas on a cabaret motif, more subtly suggestive in its abstract treatment than factual in representation.

The whole scheme is based on the premise that in modern methods of teaching art to children and adolescents. it is what the pupil undergoes, rather than what he does, that is of educational importance. This is shown in some of the designs in which patterns are unusual and striking. While the scheme initiated by Mr. Coe at Hutt Valley has many original aspects, it echoes, in some ways, modern developments in secondary art work in England and other countries.

The exhibition in Wellington will close on Saturday, November 9.



FRIDAY NIGHT STREET SCENE: A representational composition (Stage IV), by Jane Smith, aged 16