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BAKING POWDER

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T. J. EDMONDS LTD.,  
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KOHU KOHU (pen and watercolour), by Eric Lee Johnson

## BOOKS

### Art in New Zealand

YEAR BOOK OF THE ARTS, 1947. Edited by Howard Wadman. H. H. Tombs Ltd. (Wellington).

(Reviewed by Isobel Andrews)

NEW ZEALAND is probably the best fed, best clad country in the world at the present time. Bodily needs are catered for with an abundance which overflows and burgeons over in our acres of green pasturage, our fat stock, our butter, cheese and fruit. We are in the way of being the world's storehouse. No man need go hungry in New Zealand to-day. No child need be without a winter overcoat or a new bathing suit. If the mere satisfaction of physical needs is a major requirement of human happiness, New Zealand is a good country to live in.

But intelligent human beings need more than this. Physical contentment is not enough. Man needs more, for his soul's sake, than sufficient food, sufficient clothing and a roof over his head. The things of the mind, the appurtenances of what we call our civilisation—the creative impulses, the craving for an adequate form of self-expression, are latent to a lesser or greater degree in all of us, according to our individual temperaments.

This is why Howard Wadman's latest issue of *Year Book of the Arts* is a welcome and intelligent addition to our all too few evidences of artistic expression and awareness. The book is broken up into various sections each dealing with a different art form and the reviewing of such is not easy, especially when one has a certain diffidence at being set up as Oracle, plus an importunate deadline to contend with.

#### THE ARTISTS

THE visual arts are very well covered and over 60 artists are represented, a few in colour, but the majority in

black and white. Viewed with a layman's eye, Mr. Wadman's selection seems an excellent one, presenting a diversity of mood and method which can at times become exciting and which enables us to look forward to the progress of art in New Zealand with real interest and hope.

Short autobiographical sketches and brief explanations of their various credos are supplied by John Weeks, Archibald Nicoll, T. A. McCormack, Rita Angus, Eric Lee Johnson and Mervyn Taylor. I found John Weeks and Eric Lee Johnson particularly interesting—Weeks because of the vitality which shines through the rather staccato phrasing, and Eric Lee Johnson because he, of all the others in the book, appears to have imbued his art with some of the meaning and richness of his own country.

I must leave specific criticism of individual works to others more competent to analyse and appraise from the purely technical point of view. Personal choice ("I know what I like!") accepts some and rejects others. The limits of the black and white reproductions become irritating when viewing such works as Rita Angus's arresting self-portrait, or her Goddess of Mercy, but one realises the impossibility of reproducing all the works in colour and must accept the situation as it is. Leo Benseman, Russell Clark, Sam Cairncross, S. B. MacLennan, Colin McCahon, Pearl West, all show their own individualities in their own way, and the collection as a whole can stand comparison with any similar collection from overseas.

JOHN WEEKS says, among other things, that "Blind acceptance of the best work of the past encourages a lazy mind and results in nothing but weak imitation." This brings me to the one real disappointment I found in this section. In the main our artists, though not weak, are derivative. The lushness

*Hands applaud*



\* Illustrated is one of the many new designs in Black Cape, featuring stud points and distinctive turn-back cuffs in White Cape.

*Sutherland Gloves*

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