



Sparrow Pictures

PHOTOGRAPHS of sculpture and ceramics are also included in the exhibition, this example being the work of Lowell Alden

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there is such a paucity of meaning, of any kind at all, that one wonders just what private impulse it is that has gone astray; or whether Mr. Bess was just working on the assumption that any sort of pictorial surface that is as *unlike* an academy painting as possible must on that account be good. The logic of art is not so simple.

Those who complain (as I do) that it is unreal for a 20th century New Zealander or Texan to try to dress like a 16th century Englishman, or to paint like a 17th century Dutchman, should be equally critical of a New Zealander or a Texan who tries to paint like a Parisian. Nothing is more fictitious, or more boring, than those paintings done by simple colonials in close imitation of Picasso or Chagall. It reminds one of New Hebridean natives wearing nothing but bowler hats and brightly coloured cricket belts in an attempt to be European. (I am not denying that it is possible for a sophisticated colonial to paint in a sophisticated way—but in that case there will not be any crude regurgitation of undigested European models.) The catalogue tells us that "as in any other contemporary national school, the artists of Texas can be divided into four groups: (1) Those who

paint in a modern or expressionistic manner. . . . (2) The French-influenced school. . . . (3) The experimental group, who try to avoid schools and work as individuals. Most of the work in this show comes from this group. (4) The academic realists." Whether they "work as individuals" or not, there is little doubt that these painters would not have painted as they do if they had not become more strongly and less sensitively aware of contemporary European painting than has been good for them. In any case, if an individual is *merely* an individual, cut off from any organic tradition, he is likely to prove as "individual" and "original," and to inhabit as private a world, as the man who imagines he is a tea-pot.

The best things in this show (best because they are simple and honest, and obviously related in some sort of organic way to life in Texas) are several lithographs. In "Invasion" Merritt Mauzey gives us a record of something he has obviously grasped and understood. This is not great art, but it is genuine art. Mauzey's "Andrew Goodman" is also a good, straightforward piece of work, slightly marred by some jiggery-pokery in the background.

I repeat that it is interesting, and useful, to see this work from Texas—if

ACCEPTED BY THE ROYAL ACADEMY

CABLED news from London the other day announced that Max Walker, a 30-year-old Dunedin artist, had had one of his pictures accepted by the Royal Academy. He had been in London for only 18 months, studying, working hard, and attending exhibitions, and the picture accepted was one of the first three he submitted to the hanging committee. It is a tempera study, 18 by 24 inches, called "Shops in Bayswater," and was painted from the window of the lodgings of another New Zealander, W. Lonie, formerly of Mosgiel, who is studying textiles in London. In New Zealand Max Walker studied at Dunedin under Russell Clark and R. N. Field. Here is what Russell Clark told *The Listener* about him:

"Max came to my classes in 1934, immediately after leaving John McGlashan College, and was with me till I left Dunedin in 1938. After that he had about 18 months at the Dunedin Technical (Art School) with R. N. Field, also doing some part-time teaching there. That was, apparently, the end of his training, and it is quite remarkable that he has been able to achieve so much with such short tuition. It gives a very good clue to his personal make-up. He is unusually gifted with the ability to draw and paint and, what is probably equally important, the desire to use that ability.

Varied Subjects

"The quantity and quality of his work was amazing. He was always tremendously enthusiastic about anything he was doing and this was shown in the lightness and spontaneity of his work. His choice of subjects and the media in which he worked were varied. He went in for portraits, figure compositions, landscapes, and still-life, in oil, water-colour, and pencil, and often portrait heads in clay. This might seem to suggest that he jumped from one thing to



MAX WALKER

another, but that is true only so far as it shows his enthusiastic interest in a wide variety of subjects."

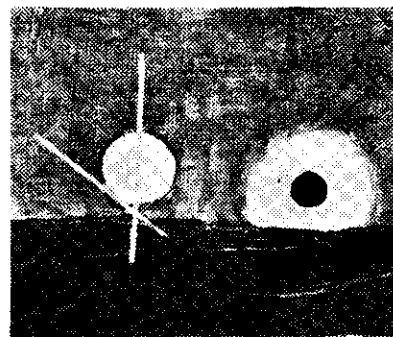
Russell Clark recalls how keenly Max Walker went to work on an old, dilapidated room which he rented in Dunedin, turning it into a charming and workable studio. That was the first of three studios he occupied in the south. In 1939 he held a successful one-man show in the Savoy Gallery in Dunedin. It was his intention, on reaching London, to enter the Royal College of Art, and arrangements were made from New Zealand for him to sit a special entrance examination. But a hitch occurred somewhere and this was found to be impossible.

Round the Galleries

Shortly afterwards Max Walker met the well-known English artist Frank Allen, who took a great interest in his work. Allen suggested that as Walker already had an excellent grounding, he should not enter a school, but study on his own by visiting the galleries and art shows on every possible occasion. According to his letters he followed that very sound advice. To be accepted by the Royal Academy on the first entry is something of an achievement; a great many artists have tried unsuccessfully for years.

"Whether we place great importance on acceptance by the R.A.," remarks Russell Clark, "the technical requirements at least are most rigid, and it is proof that Max Walker must have had that part of his equipment well in hand. Slighting reference to the R.A. usually comes from extremists, or those who place no value on the craftsmanship of painting."

With three others—Lady Welby, Mrs. E. Welby and Kathleen Brown (a Christchurch girl)—Walker will hold a show in a Berkeley Street gallery in September. An interesting note from a recent letter is on the cost of renting even a small gallery in London for such an exhibition. The charge is from £50 a week.



"TWO SUNS," by Forrest Bess, has "a paucity of meaning"

for no other reason, because it illustrates the kind of misapprehensions about "modern art" that we in New Zealand can very easily come to share with people in Texas. If I appear to have been too harsh in my judgment, I can only plead that rough-riding is, after all, in the tradition of Texas.