



DOUGLAS MacDIARMID

## ART

### "Reporting Remembered in Emotion"

come back. He is a New Zealander, though not obviously stamped "New Zealand painter." He is just a painter. He was born in Taihape, and spent his early schooldays there, then graduated in art from Canterbury University College before going to Paris—where for three years he studied, not with people, but with pictures, and with the visible scene.

He exhibits at the Wellington Public Library both water colours and oils. He has not settled down to a single style. There are among the water colours things that remind one a little of Frenchmen—of Toulouse-Lautrec say, in a piece of flat colour and a sort of vivid shorthand in a small girl's face; or of the swift calligraphy of Dunoyer Segonzac; but one doesn't find oneself thinking, "Ah, he's been trying to copy Toulouse-Lautrec, or Dunoyer Segonzac, or Degas, or Matisse." He's not merely slick, not merely a clever copy-cat; whatever he does, he manages to remain MacDiarmid.

I gather that he is a desperately hard worker, painting a good deal from crammed notebooks and from memory—

so that what we get is not exactly emotion recollected in tranquillity, like Wordsworth's poetry, but reporting remembered in emotion. On the other hand, I fancy that if this is so, his subconscious must do a fair amount of his fundamental brainwork, and he must have been excited as he moved around taking notes; so it may to a certain extent be emotion recollected in tranquillity after all. Whatever the psychological process, one gets the impression of freedom—freedom and a quite enchanting play and flow of light; and yet the pictures are firm and well-based too.

The oils are not so immediately likeable in feeling, though they may grow on one. Both the technique and the point of view are interesting; colour laid on very flat and thin, sometimes with brush, sometimes with finger; vision concentrated and detailed, like that of a miniaturist, only on a larger scale. Some of them are perhaps a bit gauche, like the work of an intensely careful primitive. Certainly the oils are not so free as the water colours. Well, you can't be so free in oil; or rather, you can't give the same effect of freedom, though



ROSARIO AVELLANEDA, a portrait in oils by Douglas MacDiarmid.

IT is sometimes a comfort, in the midst of the antics of councils of art societies and of city councils concerned with art, to reflect that we have a few artists among us. It is particularly comforting to reflect that some of our artists who go away do come back. Douglas MacDiarmid is one of those who have

in your "free" water colour, you're in fact technically so much more strictly controlled. But again in these oils, one remembers the general impression of light—light very skilfully caught and disposed, filtered as it were over the surface of the picture. So that Mr. MacDiarmid, though I imagine he has not yet reached his maturity as a painter, is certainly worth paying attention to.

—J. C. Beaglehole

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N.Z. LISTENER, JULY 8, 1949.