



M. JENKIN and Miss M. Fairey preparing for the exhibition of children's art now on display at the Auckland Art Gallery

ART AND INNOCENCE

THE Auckland Art Gallery presents a lively spectacle at the present time. Once again the youngest generation has invaded its precincts. The Auckland branch of the Art and Crafts section of the Education Department has organised a show of some 300 drawings from all over the province, by children between the ages of three and fifteen. It is an exhibition that should not be missed by anybody, whether or not he usually takes an interest in art. For this is not Art beginning with a capital A (which so often implies ending with a full-stop). It is simply the child's vision of the world, expressed pictorially—one might almost say poetically—in 300 different ways, with all the charm and vividness of the "innocent eye."

There are many occasions on which we can share the feelings of Byron when he was staying in Italy with the Leigh Hunts and their uncountable offspring, and wrote to a friend in England that he "sometimes had a lively sympathy with the character of Herod." But kindlier emotions usually rule all but the most curmudgeonly of us when we are thinking about children; and on those rare occasions when we adults are given a glimpse of the world we have left behind us, the experience, if we have any powers of imagination, is usually at least stimulating, and often delightful. This, I think, is such an occasion. I should be disappointed with my fellow adults if I thought they were incapable of responding to the appeal of such an exhibition as this.

Looking at this riot of youthful vitality, and marvelling at its freshness, one

finds oneself asking, "How do these children get their ideas?" When a teacher takes a class, there are various ways in which things may be set moving. With the younger children "scribble patterns" are often used. The child takes a crayon and makes a scribble-line all over the paper, and then proceeds to fill in the various parts with decoration, or uses the scribble as a basis for a drawing of people or things. The purpose of this is to dissociate drawing from the representation of objects and allow "free expression" of the purely aesthetic impulses in the young mind. If anybody is inclined to doubt the psychological soundness of this method, I suggest that he look at some of the examples produced, and at the results it leads to when children are a little more developed.

Sometimes the children are asked to make a drawing illustrating "Danger," or "Happiness," or "Moonlight" or some similar idea. Or a piece of music will be played and they will attempt to draw what it suggests to them. The outcome is sometimes startling. Many of these drawings have an intensity and a directness of emotional expression that move the adult artist to envy and despair.

There are drawings in this show of "People at the Pictures," "Finish of a Bicycle Race" and other such subjects



"THE CARDPLAYER," by B. Swanson (aged 12)

that are extremely funny—to what extent consciously it is not always easy to decide. In other cases the feeling for design and colour is most striking. If these pictures were put on sale I think they would go like hot cakes, for they would brighten up any suburban home.

This exhibition is, I think, the best of its kind yet seen here. The range of work is astonishing—spectacular designs in vivid primary colour, fantastic or comic representations of human beings, abstract patterns, every variety of theme and mood and treatment.

If any Aucklander feels depressed during the next few weeks—about football or the weather, or anything else—I recommend a visit to the Art Gallery.

—A.R.D.F.

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