



N.Z. ART GOES OVERSEAS

VITALITY was the first quality Helen Hitchings, of Wellington, looked for when she set out some time ago to bring together a collection of New Zealand paintings for exhibition in Britain and on the Continent. Wellington gallery-goers had an opportunity recently to decide whether she had succeeded when, just before she left for Europe, she exhibited the results of her search: about 50 paintings by 18 artists.

Though she wanted vitality to be the essential quality in the work she took away (and she believed that the pictures she had chosen showed the most vital element in New Zealand painting today), Miss Hitchings told *The Listener*, she felt that the collection was also an answer to those who thought that the younger and more experimental painters were immature in outlook and unaware of the need for technical skill.

"I feel that New Zealand painting has suffered very badly from a lack of informed critical appraisal," Miss Hitchings said, when asked why she was taking the collection to Europe. "I think the artists who have contributed to this collection all feel the need of the sort of appraisal that the pictures will get when they are shown in London and other cities of Britain, in Paris, and (I hope) other parts of the Continent. Apart from the criticisms that will appear in the ordinary way, I hope to persuade some of the best critics to write something about the collection for publication in New Zealand."

Miss Hitchings said that there were a few people in New Zealand capable of making critical judgments on paintings, but difficulties arose in a small community where people were very dependent on one another. We also lacked standards of comparison. Because of our isolation we saw relatively little outside work.

Throughout New Zealand when she was seeking pictures for her collection,

Miss Hitchings looked for paintings concerned with people as well as with the landscape. "But though I was very conscious of this," she said, "I find them curiously lacking now that the pictures have been brought together. Anyone looking at New Zealand through its paintings alone might almost think it uninhabited. My failure to find more paintings of people is a disappointment. But evidently New Zealand artists have not yet reached a stage where they relate themselves to the landscape. Another obvious fact about the collection is that there is no school of New Zealand painting."

Miss Hitchings's gallery in Wellington has for almost two years been a point where designers, producers, artists and the public can meet. Miss Hitchings has felt strongly that the younger painters need a friendly atmosphere in which to show their work and the chance to hear it discussed.

While overseas—she will be away for about 18 months—Miss Hitchings will study ceramics and the history and theory of painting in London and Paris. She plans to bring back overseas work for her gallery, if only as a stimulus for others. On her return she hopes to exhibit her New Zealand loan collection in the other main centres.

The Internal Affairs Department is contributing towards the venture and will meet the cost of showing the pictures in London, and the British Council and the British Arts Council have offered help, while the collection is in Britain. Friends of the Helen Hitchings Gallery have also assisted.

Artists represented in the collection are M. T. Woollaston, Colin McCahon, Rita Angus, Sam Cairncross, John Weeks, Eric Lee-Johnson, Louise Henderson, Douglas MacDiarmid, Charles Tole, Doris Lusk, Evelyn Page, May Smith, Dennis Knight Turner, John Zambelis, W. H. Reed, John Tole, Juliet Peter and Gordon McAuslan.



HELEN HITCHINGS and (at top of page) some of the New Zealand paintings which she is to exhibit in Britain and on the Continent

Shortwave Frequencies

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STIG DAHLBERG, a 26-year-old first clerk of the Swedish State Board of Waterfalls, has written to Radio New Zealand, asking for the name of someone in New Zealand who will send stamps to him in exchange for Swedish stamps. His address is: Stig Dahlberg, Malmudden H5, Lulea, Sweden.

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