



£1000 Scholarship Winner

sort of person he expects an artist to be and he will probably draw a picture of an eccentric and rather unpractical character, sharing few of the interests of his fellows and living in an Ivory Tower. When The Listener called to see J. R. (Rov) Cowan a few days after he was awarded the Association of New Zealand Art Societies' £1000 scholarship it found that he didn't fit into the pattern. For a start the nearest he has got to an Ivory Tower is a well-lit room at the School Publications branch of the Education Department in Featherston Street, Wellington. If he cranes his neck to look out of the window he might on some days just catch a glimpse the big silver racing car that he designed and has driven in competitions around Wellington in recent years-a car that has been stared at about as much as any in the capital.

Designing and racing motor-cars seems a practical enough interest, and we found that in his daily work, too, Mr. Cowan is very much in touch with the world. Assistant Art Editor for School Publications, he has for the past

SK the man in the street the sort of person he expects an artist to be and he will probly draw a picture of an eccence and rather unpractical charter, sharing few of the interests his fellows and living in an Ivory wer. When The Listener called to E. J. R. (Roy) Cowan a few days after was awarded the Association of New Zealand's island territories and the bulletins for primary schools, now and then turning aside to illustrate one of these publications himself. He has also done some writing for children, and when The Listener called had on his desk drawings for a story of his own, about a boy who grew fantastically long hair, which Standard III children will be able to read later in the year.

Beginning at the beginning, we asked Mr. Cowan when his interest in art began. He was at Wellington Teachers' Training College, he said, when the late Roland Hipkins, then art lecturer there, "patiently criticised some terrible first efforts" and encouraged him to go on. As a general teacher he was in several schools, mainly in the Wellington district, and he also had a spell at the Correspondence School before he left teaching to seek work offering more scope for his interest in art.

How did he react as a painter to his daily work as an art editor? Without hesitation Mr. Cowan said he thought his job congenial to one working in the fine arts. It was stimulating to be handling the work of other artists, and he



A.P.S. photograp
ROY COWAN

larly for "Sundowner" articles, will be remembered by readers. Mr. and Mrs. Cowan will leave for England in August and will attend the same school in London.

Discussing his ideas about art, Mr. Cowan several times came back to the point: "You must remember these are

the thoughts of a man only just feeling his way. I do not set myself up as an authority!" This attitude came out when he mentioned work done during the war. Serving with the Fleet Air Arm in England and East Africa ("mostly ashore ... flying the most amazing collection of planes you ever saw . . . hunting for subs in the Indian Ocean my most exciting form warfare") there was little chance to paint, so Mr. Cowan did a good deal of black and white work which was later exhibited in Wellington. "I found I had everything to learn," he said, "so I restricted my work to black and white so that I could concentrate on the drawing and the tonal organisation of my pictures. For com-

bined with the pattern of colour in a painting, and the spatial pattern, there must be a coherence of tones. I believe that a period of concentration on pictures in tone helped me when I turned to colour."

to colour." When Mr. Cowan said he had done lot of work on the maintenance of planes during the war we asked him if this was connected with his subsequent interest in cars and motor-racing. I've always been interested in mechanical things—it's one of my main interests apart from art," he said. "I feel that the ability to design things-to envisage the construction of a machine, say-is the same as that needed to design a work of art. I consider that there are broadly two schools of painting. One school, the prevailing one in New Zealand, allows the visual image to dominate. The paintings tend to be realistic ropies of the subject-usually a landscape treated in a loose or Impressionistic manner. The other school, which I think influences me more, accepts a rethinking and re-ordering of the material.



"HORSES"-one of the paintings submitted by Roy Cowan with his Scholarship entry

would rather be supervising the production of publications than drawing to order all the time.

"This is a type of work where the artist fits in perfectly and where his particular ability is needed," he said. "I hope to come back to it at the end of my two years overseas and to apply what I have learned. Part of my time will be given to a study of book production—subjects such as illustration, lithography and perhaps typography. I believe printing and the allied graphic arts are one of the great mediums open to the artist today, but the training of artists in New Zealand doesn't equip them for work in this field."

An especially pleasing feature of the scholarship for Mr. Cowan is that his wife, the artist Juliet Peter, will be going with him to continue her studies at the Central School of Arts and Crafts, London, where she spent most of 1951. Mr. Cowan met Miss Peter at School Publications, where she was Staff Artist for a number of years. Her work in The Listener some years ago, particu-