

THE GROUP

1946

EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS

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Apart from a very few works by artists who evidently believe that modernity is to be attained by the mere adoption of certain formulae, the 1946 exhibition of paintings and drawings by members of The Group is so interesting as to warrant the statement that every lover of art should take the opportunity of seeing it.

This exhibition is interesting for the reason, among others, that the members of The Group are not required to submit their works to a censorious hanging committee, but are permitted each to be judge of his own work. The circumstance obliges the visitor to acquaint himself with the aim of the artist in each picture.

The aim of J. A. Johnstone, in his landscapes, "Middy, Lyttelton Harbour," "From Church Bay," and "Near Hanmer," is primarily to accomplish the effect of colour as having its being in light. In all of them, he brings his subject between himself and the source of light, with the result, of course, that form is subordinated to atmospheric colour. In "From Church Bay," certainly, he achieves his purpose.

To attain radiance of light, Rhona Fleming, in "Autumn, Governor's Bay" and in "Passing the Akaroa Light," employs other and very different means. She brings her subjects into the full light of the sun and, by thoughtfully placing clearly defined shapes of inter-related colour, attains an effect of solar brilliance.

Rita Lovell-Smith introduces further elements. Upon her, the effect of a landscape includes an expression of substance as well as of atmosphere. Not only colour but also form as evinced by light and shade—and "breadth" as well—are in her view integrate parts of truth. Strikingly characteristic is her "Gate on the Crest."

Of the landscapes of W. A. Sutton, the one that commands first attention is "Apricot Orchard." The title is inappropriate, for the dominating features of the picture are grim, bare mountains peculiar to Otago Central. The artist is to be praised for his essaying a task so difficult, and for his bringing it to a conclusion so impressive.

Of all the pictures in the exhibition, those of Rita Cook are the most individualistic. In part this is so because this artist's talents of perception and expression are peculiarly her own; partly, because her technical methods are founded in understanding of herself and of the fundamentals of her subject. Margaret Anderson's landscapes and studies in still life, by contrast, are not at all individualistic but are, in an exciting degree, untraditional. Two portraits, by Leo Benzenmann, are very definitely individualistic.

The aim of W. J. Reed, in "Fox Hole," "Torment," and "Camouflage," is to produce in the beholder emotions akin to those experienced by the artist in fields of battle. This means he employs are firmly drawn shapes based on natural forms, including the human face, but so conventionalised as to give an impression of nightmarish unreality. If his purpose is to show that emotions in battle are evilly ugly, he attains it. Another experienced in battle, Austin Deans, contributes to this exhibition a collection of pencil drawings made while he was a prisoner in enemy territory. Very evidently, as a draughtsman, he respects sincerity and disrespects affectation. His strength lies in his appreciation of the value of planes in the portraying of the third dimension. His weakness is that he is unable to relate the smaller structural facts of the human figure to the larger ones. A course in anatomy might help him.

Others contributing to the exhibition are Doris Lusk, Colin McCahon, Douglas MacDiarmid, Juliet Peter, Fred Shewell, Cora Wilding, and M. T. Woolleston.

—L.H.B.

Individual Methods Shown In Display Of Artists' Work

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The large gathering of guests present last evening at the opening of the exhibition of paintings, drawings and sculpture by "The Group" (1946) found much in interest, to commend and to criticise in the individual and arresting treatment of subjects there displayed. Inasmuch as the exhibition expressed individuality far apart from conventional methods, the address given by Mr R. S. Lonsdale, who formally opened the exhibition, on the development of art in the Canterbury province, ran also on revolutionary lines, as he expressed his frank criticism of the era in which Canterbury's art collection was first inaugurated, and the conventional methods of tuition still abiding.

The whole meaning of painting was the acquiring of technique sometimes by small degrees, to produce something really new, he suggested. The Group with its element of independence and its experimental work was a particularly valuable factor. Before passing judgment he would ask those interested in the

To-day's Recipe

Canadian Cookies

- 1 cup butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 egg
- 2 cups rolled oats
- 1 cup flour
- 1/2 cup hot water
- 1 teaspoon soda
- 1 rounded teaspoon baking powder

Cream together butter and sugar. Beat in egg, add oats and flour. Mix to a dough with hot water, soda, and golden syrup, blended together. Roll thin, cut into biscuit squares, and cook in brisk oven. Spread with butter if liked. These have a nutty flavour.

exhibition to study the work carefully, and to try to look at the paintings through another person's eyes.

There was one guest exhibitor, Fred Sherwell. Group members exhibiting were: Margaret Anderson, Leo Benzenmann, Olivia Spencer Bower, Rita Cook, Austin Deans, R. N. Field, Rhona Fleming, Louise Henderson, J. A. Johnstone, Doris Lusk, Douglas MacDiarmid, Colin McCahon, Evelyn Page, Juliet Peter, W. J. Reed, Rita Lovell-Smith, Cora Wilding, M. T. Woolleston and William Sotton.

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