

PRIVATE VIEW by Brian Fallon

Modern Art in Kilkenny



Ron Rooymans, the Dutch painter showing at the Shee Alms House.

Bob Janz, Ruth Brandt, Robert Armstrong, Pauline Cummins, which later in the evening will go up for auction. The proceeds are in aid of the Anti-Amendment Campaign.

Finally, from Monday week, September 11th, the Douglas Hyde Gallery will be showing a selection of the works submitted for the GPA Awards for Emerging Artists (GPA stands for Guinness Peat Aviation). The awards themselves have already been announced, but the exhibition itself has in a very few years developed into virtually the successor of the Living Art Exhibition. It is very much the forum for the young, semi-official avant-garde, and last year's exhibition, in particular, was a very lively one.

As well, there were various photographic exhibitions, Wendy Walsh's flower paintings (many of which have already appeared in "An Irish Florilegium," the massive volume published some months ago by Thames and Hudson); craft exhibitions, and a plethora of fringe events.

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IT IS GOOD news that the Tulfarris Art Gallery, silent for several months, returns to active service when an exhibition by Patrick Pye opens there on September 11th. The opening will be performed by Thomas Kinsella, the poet. My impression that the gallery has been virtually closed over the summer is false — I'm told there have been pictures on show there, but no "official" exhibitions as such. Presumably it will now hold regular events over the autumn and winter. The Taylor Galleries, similarly inactive for some months, began its autumn-winter season yesterday with an exhibition of works by the late Kitty Wilmer O'Brien.

At 7 o'clock this evening at the Damer Hall in Dublin you can view works by Patrick Scott, Mary Farl Powers, Eithne Jordan, Noel Sheridan, Nigel Rolfe (not, presumably, portions of his torso),

of grays and dull blacks and browns, and the imagery is mostly unremarkable.

To eschew the richer ranges of colour, and the power of striking imagery as well, is to sacrifice a lot. In fact, Rooymans at times does come close to the kind of discreet, tasteful "minimalism" which is very much in vogue again (it had a good run in the fifties). But given time, his work has real tonal subtlety and a kind of underlying sea, water and air ambience; these pictures are, in fact, about something, not just sensitive, low-keyed essays in tonal abstraction.

In the Roberts Bookshop, Brian Lalor was literally turning out etchings watched by a small, changing but fascinated audience. The result, views of Kilkenny, hung overhead; the complete set was on view in the old AIB building in Patrick Street. The engraved plates lay at hand and the artist inked them, laid them under the roller with a sheet of paper (very special paper, of course) and turned out a neat etching, each with its own slight individual variations in inking.

Brian Lalor—who recently produced a book of views of Dublin—is a very traditional artist, almost an old-style topographical illustrator in fact. But he is an excellent technician, and he has a real feeling for place—nice to think, with our modern Airport Culture, that there are such people around still.

Seemingly, then, we are dealing with a medium in its infancy, and in fact some of the exhibits were insubstantial—magic-lantern tricks which are good fun but of no special weight. Some, however, were almost uncanny; for instance, the phantom pair of spectacles which projected out to the spectator so realistically that one was invariably tempted into touching it, like Macbeth's phantom dagger. Some of the colour effects were also beautiful, though less so, I would have said, than those produced by the Op Art practitioners of the sixties. And one holograph of what looked like Saturn rotating (no doubt it wasn't) had a kind of unearthly beauty.

Holography may have a considerable future, or it may prove a passing fad. Its illusionistic qualities are considerable, though whether or not it will blossom into a genuine art form as such remains to be seen.

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BY CONTRAST, the paintings by Ron Rooymans in the Shee Alms House were recognisably in the International Abstract style, though with their own cool individuality. Rooymans is a Dutchman, Amsterdam-taught, who for years has come to Ireland regularly to work on a small deserted island in Clew Bay. His work is not striking at first glance, nor indeed even at second glance. The palette is muted, with a great deal

THIS YEAR'S Kilkenny Arts Week, the tenth, seems stronger on music and readings than in visual art; at least, the first two have created the greater interest. However there was a lively reaction to "Laservision," the exhibition in the Kilkenny Castle gallery—no heavyweight event, as it turned out, but something that struck just the right festival note of novelty.

The strict term for this new medium is "holography," which I have heard about intermittently in the last few years, but had never come across at first hand. Basically, it is a photographic process involving the use of laser beams—a slow and involved one too, it seems—which produces three-dimensional images, or at least the illusion of them. Hanging around the walls were a number of unexciting-looking glass plates in frames—some were also suspended from the ceiling—which when viewed head-on under a strong beam of light, produced quite startling effects.

The two dominant figures in the exhibition, Susan Gamble and Michael Wenyon, are both in their twenties and work in the Goldsmith's Holography Workshop in London, which is financed by the Gulbenkian Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation and the British Arts Council. I quote from the catalogue; "the techniques are still in their infancy and much of the workshop's equipment has been built up by Michael Wenyon himself. The lasers they use are considered rudimentary, but they cost £2,500 each; they require exposure times of from 10 seconds to 10 minutes, which limits the subject-matter available, as the slightest touch will ruin a hologram."