DESIGN OF THE THEATRE AND DESIGN IN THE THEATRE

The main feature in this issue is a discussion of what designers can contribute to the theatre in New Zealand. Above: A National Theatre, by J. A. Beard. Left: Set for Major Barbara, by Geoffrey Nee.

Also in this issue:

THE DEMONSTRATION HOUSE
SAM CAIRNCROSS A YEAR LATER
AUCKLAND CIVIC CENTRE CRITICISED
The theatre is a workshop. Cheap grandeur for the audience and cramped inconvenience for everybody else—that is the old standard. The new must provide adequate space and equipment for all the artists and technicians who contribute to the soul-shaking illusion of the stage.
A THEATRE TO SEAT 800

Project for a prototype New Zealand Drama Centre sketched and described by J. A. Beard

Gilded halls, with their cramped seats, sight-screening posts, banging lobby doors, heaven-sourcing “gods,” and protruding ornamental papier mâché and plaster fripperies—these are the playhouses of New Zealand. Although new enthusiasm has been given to New Zealand dramatic art by the visit of the Old Vic, what a sorry picture New Zealand theatres presented to the members of this company whose leader was prompted to say: “... the building of theatres seems to be an art we have lost...”

It has been suggested that a dramatic centre be built as a war memorial, but whether this be so or whether it be part of a community institution—a school of drama or whether it is just to serve the people of a big city—let us have no more of these gilded halls. Instead we need the desirable intimacy, and good vision and acoustics are detrimentally affected.

The vestibule is spacious and provides for easy movement of crowds. It contains ticket boxes, cloak, lavatories, manager’s room, administration, and refreshment bar. Access to the foyer on the first floor is by easy stairs or ramps. The ramps are a means of quick exit for the crowd in emergency. The foyer, apart from its use during a show, may be used for exhibitions, receptions and rehearsals. Access to the auditorium is provided at many points from the rear with aisles ensuring that people find their seats quickly and easily. There are no doors between auditorium and foyer. This is a novel feature, but acoustical analysis can achieve this. The use of seating in which each row becomes an aisle is accepted as a better arrangement than the cramped seats of the orthodox method. Every member of the audience has a full view of the stage. The floor slopes and the heads of spectators are always below the line of vision of those seated behind. Empty seats in the house may spoil the spirit of actors and audience alike. To avoid this the capacity may be reduced by movable lightweight partitions suspended on ceiling tracks and rollers. However, they are designed so that good proportions of the auditorium are retained at any time. After good vision has been ensured the interior form of the theatre should be largely determined by acoustical research. Experts should be consulted and models tested before fixing on a design.

Sometimes in a modern theatre the audience ought to take an active part in what is happening on the stage. The forestage projecting into the auditorium gives greater opportunities for performances to be seen in the “round” rather than through a picture frame. This forestage, large enough for an entire play to be given on it, can be furnished from either of the wings or a storeroom in the basement.
as it may be raised or lowered. Fully raised, it constitutes a direct extension of the main stage. Lowered to the auditorium level, it adds to the seating accommodation. When lowered further, it forms an orchestra pit. The entire floor of the main stage, including the revolving stage and wings, will be covered with rails for shifting scenery. This will be done with stage trolleys. Provision is made for the use of the conventional back drops, etc., and the cyclorama. The use of the cine-projector for the production of backdrops provides a wider range of convincing effects than the familiar atmosphere of painted canvas. But to take full advantage of the many gradations and subtleties, relatively elaborate projecting and illuminating equipment is necessary. For this a projection and lighting box is envisaged, capable of moving longitudinally in the ceiling of the auditorium.

Dressing-rooms, green room, workshops, paintshops, rehearsal space, ample storage space, etc., are provided to the rear and basement of the stage.

The commercial theatre offers merely two and a half hours' escape at so much a head. It cannot become a social centre, and has no wish to be. Among its pretentious foyers it therefore provides no space in which anyone would wish to linger for more than the 'interval'—

whereas the theatre of to-morrow will be a true expression of community life. With a buffet open every evening and wall space for art exhibitions, its foyer becomes, as in the great theatres of Scandinavia, a social centre, a place for the intelligent use of leisure. Its profits will be small; its value to the cultural life of this country immense.
DESIGN IN THE THEATRE  Helen Hitchings

Theatre décor is frequently regarded as a kind of garnish to the main dish like parsley sprigs on the Van Deuren savory or frilled paper round the Slavian ham. That this effect is so often the sole impression made on an audience by the visual aspect of a production points to an inadequate use of the theatre medium and some misunderstanding of the role of the designer.

In essence, the function of the designer is the same as that of the actor, although each uses such different tools. The actor has to interpret and create from the playwright's material and the designer assist him to do so with imagination and subtlety. The visual contribution should be neither superfluous nor an interference with the intentions of the playwright, but a help in expressing those intentions with the greatest impact.

The Production as a Whole

It is hard to define that ultimate and supreme characteristic in the work of art which compels our emotions and imagination. Those ineffable proportions of completely satisfying wholeness lie somewhere in the exquisite relationship of numbers of qualities to each other and to the idea involved. This applies no less to a production which is a complex creative effort in visual and audible expression. If any small portion is disregarded or another given over-eager or meaningless emphasis, the proportions are lost. What came near to being a work of art is at best merely a performance. No single part of the creative and interpretative effort which adds up to a production must be overlooked. Each must be fully explored and then integrated to capture that perfection of unity, achieved when an audience no longer consciously watches a spectacle, but lives a drama.

Stimulating the Mind

In creating a visual equivalent of the general mood of the play one does not necessarily attempt to duplicate all the conditions of real life. As far as theatre is concerned with reality, it is the illusion of reality. The task is to suggest to an audience just so much as will stimulate their minds to imagine the rest. Macbeth's witches can certainly stir the cauldron under a hessian boulder against a painted moor. However, the task is to suggest to an audience just so much as will stimulate their minds to imagine the rest. Macbeth's witches can certainly stir the cauldron under a hessian boulder against a painted moor. However, credibility is more likely to stand the test, if they materialize in patterned light from an organic
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AGENTS THROUGHOUT NEW ZEALAND
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Slowly, painfully, New Zealand drama societies are working themselves out of the cramping limitations of the ‘realistic’ set. The ‘willing suspension of disbelief,’ which is all the stage asks for, can be achieved with the slightest of indications—

and then the imagination is free, and positively stimulated to create its own world. Architects can be a great help in creating décor for the amateur theatre, and will find its working tools of space and light fascinating to handle.

darkness in which space is not specifically defined. One column, half an arch, and an arrangement of levels will be less impediment to imagining a Greek ruin than a whole labyrinth of marble distemper agitating in sympathy with the movement of the action and demonstrating nothing quite as much as the unfortunate 30’ x 20’ x 20’ dimensions of the stage. The whole aim is to the achieving of that point when the stage will not seem an isolated focus of action, but a universal experience.

Costumes, make-up, too, cannot be considered separately from the set any more than lighting. Even in a contemporary play, clothes have a relation to the general décor and must not create a discord for the eyes (unless deliberately, when the play calls for such an effect) any more than an actor should stutter his lines unless the interpretation clearly demands it. An actor must regard even his modern garments as a prop to assist his work in much the same way as he will take a staff to emphasize an elderly, feeble walk. Stage clothes have a variety of duties. It may be necessary for them to indicate time—the hour of the day, the season, summer or winter, as well as the period. As well, they may need to indicate a particular occasion. Their shape and colour must point a type and personality. They must sketch the mood and atmosphere of the particular moment and of the whole play.

Colour has strong emotional appeal. Its stage practice is a tricky thing and offers many pitfalls. Its adequate use can vitalize a performance. A wrong background colour—it may have been charming in a real room—can slow up the whole tempo of the play, causing the action to seem unnecessarily sluggish and that difficult first act to be a seat-squirming monotonity. While the colour should have a general significance, it must also pattern and form within itself at given moments to underlie a climax of emotion or action. The total picture of form and dimension, colour and changing pattern must efficiently demonstrate the purpose of the play.
THE DEMONSTRATION HOUSE

During the present University vacation students of the Architectural Centre are to build a Demonstration House as their project for the 1948-9 Summer School. Work is already under way.

There are two primary aims. The first is to provide architectural students with practical experience in building construction. The second is to demonstrate to New Zealanders what good design can do to provide a good place to live in.

With 12,000 houses being built in New Zealand every year, few of which adequately provide for the needs of their occupants, and most of which destroy rather than add to their surroundings, the time is long overdue for an extensive improvement in the attitude of New Zealanders to house design. The improved standard brought about by the State Housing Department since its establishment eleven years ago has not been maintained. A fresh approach is needed, and this the Demonstration House sets out to give. Its audience is the New Zealand public.

The Design of the House

Eight groups of students, with the aid when required of experienced tutors, competed in designing the house. Their greatest challenge was the site—probably one of the most difficult in Wellington. The ground slopes away on three sides with a general slope to the south. Near the top a small man-made plateau is the obvious place for the building.

Then there were the needs of the family. There are three children. Then there were the needs of the family who are to live in the house. These lucky people will not be selected until the house is built, but it was assumed that they would be a well-educated and open-minded family free from preconceived ideas on houses. It was also assumed that there are already two boys with a third child on the way—not necessarily a boy.

The house, like the family, is not necessarily the minimum accepted to-day, but rather the minimum that should be accepted in a healthy country like New Zealand.

Within 1,100 square feet of floor area it has been possible to provide three bedrooms, a large play area and general utility room and separate access to each room. The sheltered outdoor living space formed by the court, the segregation of sleeping from living quarters, and good lighting and ventilation to all rooms are particular points of interest.

Supply of Materials

Manufacturers and suppliers of building materials are competing for the supply of materials, most of which will be donated. The Master Builders' Federation is supplying a foreman, and generous assistance has been offered in many other ways. Three students to form the core of the labour force will work full time and be paid as labourers, but the main body of students will work in their spare time during evenings and weekends. It is hoped that they will make the main contribution to the work.
The house will be open to the public for inspection for six weeks when completed. It will then be sold. Any profit will go towards the establishment of a School of Architecture in Wellington.

A reinforced concrete slab with parquet flooring, unconventional timber framing, and a flat roof are the main structural features.

Permission to use vertical shipway weatherboarding was refused by the City Council despite its successful use in State houses. So was the placing of vent pipes in internal ducts instead of against the outside walls.

The house is for leisurely living rather than for the hurry and bustle of the average city commuter.

**TE ARO AGAIN**

The exhibition “Te Aro Replanned” aimed at stimulating public interest in town planning and at showing what could be done for Wellington’s blighted centre. This object was achieved. Public apathy, the common deterrent to progressive town planning, was broken down.

Public reaction indicated enthusiastic approval. It was surprising, therefore, that the only quarter from which adverse criticism has come is the City Offices. Senior executive officers are reported on several occasions to have spoken strongly against the scheme. Their criticisms are easily answered. It is unfortunate that the Architectural Centre has not been able to reply in the same manner in which the criticisms were delivered.

Three typical criticisms with brief answers follow. Space allows no more.

**Criticism One:** Insufficient area allowed for shopping.

**Answer:** Instead of leaving the shopping area strung out along the main tram routes for one and a half miles, it was spread laterally and compacted. Shopping streets were freed from serving the dual needs of traffic and shoppers, which would also save costly street widening. Detailed replanning rather than piecemeal rebuilding allowed a much greater use of available land.

**Criticism Two:** The opening up of the waterfront between Taranaki Street and Oriental Bay and the building of large hotels is economically impossible. The land should be used for warehouses.

**Answer:** The harbour is at present screened from the city by a line of sheds and fences. The area between Taranaki Street and Clyde Quay, suggested for tourist hotels, restaurants and swimming baths, is almost vacant now except for a few stores and Council yards which would be better elsewhere. What a glorious opportunity that will soon be lost for ever. There is room for wharf expansion northwards, where it should go to avoid adding to traffic congestion along Jervois Quay. Stockholm has just cleared a mile of dock area along the Lake Front to open up magnificent views from the city.

**Criticism Three:** There is no need for open space in the centre of the city.

**Answer:** Anyone visiting Te Aro with his eyes open must be appalled by the conditions. The only places for children to play are the narrow streets and tiny back yards. Factory workers must eat their lunch on the footpath and play cricket down a dirty side alley. The only reserves are three tiny triangles with public lavatories on them. One reserve provides a few seats, but on a fine day there is standing room only. By designing tall, airy blocks of flats, 12,000 people could be housed under ideal conditions with all the buildings set in one huge park.

There were other criticisms of a similar nature which indicate the same attitude. They are no more than sour protests against comprehensive planning in three dimensions, and against bold, vigorous, remedial measures.

**YEAR BOOK OF THE ARTS IN NEW ZEALAND, No. 4** Review by S. B. Maclean

Editor: Howard Wadman

The Wingfield Press (Harry H. Tombs Ltd.)

My copy of the _Arts Year Book_ has arrived so hot from the Wingfield Press (and the name suggests a distinctive device) that I have skimmed through the menu and, starting at the beginning, have rather bolted through the courses. The book opens with a challenge in the form of a dashing pen and brush drawing by Robert Brett and after an interlude which includes the attractive title page we are plunged under a cold and refreshing shower in the shape of “The Shape of Things in New Zealand” by the Editor. This is an important essay on Design which will be particularly interesting to members of the Centre.

In the prime of our one hundred-odd years of youth, we are found to be organically sound and to have enjoyed robust health socially and politically. This stimulating douche is calculated to clear away our complacency con-

(Continued on p. 15)
The Demonstration House

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This is not a complete list. Further names of contributors will be published in the next issue of Design Review.
SAM CAIRNCROSS AFTER A YEAR

E. C. Simpson

Before he left for France some eighteen months ago Sam had already reached a measure of local fame, not as a painter, but as an event with a popular amusement interest worth a few paragraphs in the paper like a stranded whale or a two-headed calf. Our reverence for mediocrity and respectable conformity was shocked into sniggering contempt for a man who permitted his fiery energy to take precedence over those most precious commodities—the certainty of the weekly payday and the privilege of two days a week on which to give free rein to the meaner pleasures of life. Sam's choice in letting go his hold on an accepted social occupation in order to find adequate expression for the urgency of his desire to paint has been a frequent mark of the genius who steps out of the monotonous traffic lane of the ordinary man. To take this step does not itself constitute genius; the motive to do so may arise from many causes much less worthy of interest and encouragement.

Sam's one-man show before his European journey showed us an artist in whom there was every promise. He was incredibly prolific, producing paintings that were often the result of a continuous application night and day until the work was complete and the painter physically and nervously exhausted. Sam never had any conception of painting as a pleasurable manual relaxation during which the mind and body recuperate agreeably from the strain of weekly living. Unlike so many New Zealand artists whose paintings are a rejection and negation of the consuming intensity of the sensation of living, Sam has painted with an energy and a delight in the expenditure of force and effort that is the peculiar property of those who live fully and enjoy it.

His earlier paintings were often as raw as an unripe fruit, showing an uncontrolled urgency in the use of violent colour, writhing line and paint slashed on with handsome prodigality; behind them and concealed by his search for a means of expression that should be a fitting symbol for his

(Continued on p. 16)
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The idea of a closed square is pleasant but an even better solution seems possible through the closing of further streets and the loosening-up of the building masses.

THE AUCKLAND CIVIC CENTRE CRITICISED

We have published this project in the last issue accompanied by the designer's report. In this issue we show a detailed site plan and wish to raise a few points for discussion on the planning aspect. We have stated previously that the scheme has great merit in many ways. However, obviously it is only in the preliminary planning stage and being an important part of the replanning of Auckland city it should receive the fullest criticism with a view to further improving the scheme. The following questions may stimulate further discussion:

The scheme provides for a new East-West Route across the city to link with the proposed Harbour Bridge and an alternative Main Outlet from the business area.

Cook Street is marked on the plan as the link to the new harbour bridge.

Can Cook Street be expected to serve this function any more efficiently than Wellesley Street, which is a subsidiary route across the ridge now? Cook Street is just as steep and just as dangerous for driving as Wellesley Street, if not more so. It is questionable what advantage could be gained by drawing a large amount of through-traffic into Cook Street in preference to Wellesley Street. Traffic on Cook Street, Vincent Street, and the new road sections circling the Civic Block (marked “new cross-city route” and “new main outlet”) meet at an awkward oblique angle. This could tend to make a danger spot unless one-way traffic only was permitted on the roads around the Civic Block. This is hardly feasible in the layout. The crossing of Wellesley Street, Albert Street, and Albert Street Extension is also particularly awkward. On the steep down-hill grade of Wellesley Street a driver would find it hard to turn into the new main outlet at the rear of the Government offices with its parking areas.

Should Cook Street develop under the scheme into a busy main connection, through-traffic to and from the proposed Harbour Bridge would have to mingle with theatre-goers, taxis and buses discharging passengers, and cars leaving and entering the ramps to the underground car park.

Similarly, there is a bad spot where Wakefield Street meets Queen Street at an oblique angle just opposite the new entrance to the inner square.

In any case, traffic from the lower end of Queen Street would reach the Harbour Bridge on direct routes remaining on flat ground and traffic from the Karangahape Road area and suburbs behind it would normally stay on the level ridge until it reaches the bridge approaches, so that it may not be necessary nor desirable to draw through-traffic into the civic area.

The block as shown is crowded with public facilities and offices, and while there is space for long-period parking underground, there is little space for the parking of short-period business visitors and evening crowds. (With all three halls occupied at the same time—and this is not unlikely to happen every Saturday night—there will be 8,000 visitors plus a large number of actors, musicians, stage-hands, etc.)

Circulation becomes a foremost consideration under those circumstances even without the added difficulty of through-traffic.
While the idea of a closed precinctual square is pleasant, its present position does not materially assist in the handling of pedestrian crowds or traffic. The open space could possibly be achieved in an even improved manner without detriment to the excellent building design. The closing of further street areas and a loosening up of the building masses and their relative approaches may be a clue to an improved solution.

EXTERNAL RENDERING OF PLASTERING

J. L. Mandeno

In the previous issue appeared some notes on the type of material used and the method of its application to produce a rendered surface that is less liable to cracking and crazing than is the finish generally applied in this country. This article deals with the reasons for the success of the procedure.

This type of failure has its origin in moisture movement or the change of volume which cement products undergo as their moisture content changes. Cement renderings must be applied in the wet state, and as they dry out shrinkage stresses are set up. These are partly tensile stresses within the material itself and tend to form cracks, and partly shear stresses between the rendering and its backing which is frequently rigid. These latter stresses therefore tend to cause failure by loss of adhesion.

When a rendering has cracked, water running down the wall is quickly drawn into the cracks by capillary action. Thus the material behind the rendering may become very wet and the trapped water cannot escape readily if the plaster is strong and impervious. Wet walls due to this cause are common and are very difficult to deal with effectively.

Again, when water gets behind a rendering as described above, it frequently leaches soluble salts from the brickwork or whatever lies behind and, when drying eventually does take place, these salts are brought out as a disfiguring efflorescence, or worse still, sulphates are brought out into contact with the cement mortar, producing sulpho-aluminate expansion and consequent serious failure.

Another trouble is caused by differential moisture movement. When a rendering dries on the surface and thus shrinks slightly while the back remains wet for a prolonged period, stresses are set up which tend to cause the surface to become concave. The result may be failure by loss of adhesion.

If, however, a weak and open-textured rendering such as the 1:3:6 mix has been used, water is absorbed into the wall evenly over the whole surface and can evaporate comparatively quickly. It has been found more waterproof than the stronger and denser types.

These renderings do not crack as badly as the strong ones. Stresses built up as a result of shrinkage or movement in the building itself are quickly relieved by the formation of minute hair cracks all over the surface. These cracks do not allow entry of water any more readily than does the more or less porous surface itself. The partial relief of stresses in weak renderings by "creep" with the prevention of at least some cracking is described below.

Crazing is another form of failure and consists of a disfiguring network of fine surface cracks. These may not
be very deep, but some frequently develop into shrinkage cracks. Cracking arises from the action of the carbon dioxide of the atmosphere forming a skin which shrinks as it is formed.

When a cement rendering is finished by steel brushing it is particularly liable to craze due to the thin layer of cement that is brought to the surface. This can be obviated by the use of the weak mixes mentioned in the previous article, and by scraping the surface to remove the rich cement layer.

The phenomenon of "creep" is important, and involves the plastic flow of materials under sustained stress. Two points about creep in concrete are important:

1. Creep is greater in lean mixes than in rich ones.
2. Creep is less for concrete stored wet than for similar specimens stored in air.

The first point indicates that shrinkage stresses can be relieved by creep more readily in weak than in strong mixes.

The second point explains why rendering in wet weather tends to be less successful than in dry weather. Experiments have shown that rendered panels kept damp for ten days cracked badly compared with panels dried naturally in the sun.

The weak rendering has the advantage of weathering uniformly over the surface, instead of showing the dirty streaks and runs so common on the smooth impermeable surfaces of strong renderings. Buildings thus retain a good appearance longer.

A common sight is the development of irregularities in colour soon after the plasterer has finished. It is characteristic of work finished with a wood float that the surface darkens at different rates from one area to another. This is due to differences in texture, some parts of the surface being more porous and absorbent than others. Buildings finished in this way soon look shabby.

Rough textured surfaces tend to cause water to drip down the wall rather than to run down in an unbroken film. The amount that does run down is reduced by absorption into the rendering as already described. Thus with these surfaces there is less tendency for the plaster to fall more seriously near the bottom than at the top of a wall—a fairly common experience with strong, dense renderings. The roughest wall, a weaker mix merely thrown on, is usually the most satisfactory.

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**ARTS YEAR BOOK** (continued from p. 9)

cerning the shape of things around us and to suggest curative treatment for a sickly condition that has been too long neglected.

The first step towards health is an exact diagnosis of the trouble. Mr. Waddman presents a clear history of the case from our infancy till to-day. He finds the pulse feeble but showing signs of improvement and feels that there is still hope. The malaise results from complicated causes, including infections which involve architecture, furniture, pottery, garden ornaments, postage stamps, telescopes—and cats. The prescription is made up of suitable doses of common sense, education, wise freedom, Plischke, Moly Macalister, Olive Jones, and other good designers. The dose is speed with some well-chosen photographs and some delightful satirical drawings by Geoffrey Nee.

Of course, the whole problem cannot be fully covered in a dozen pages and will not fulfil its purpose without the discussion it is bound to stimulate and the action which must follow. After reading the article, it struck me, for instance, that there seems to be a word lacking in our language to express that quality of good design that we call "Simplicity." "Simplicity" suggests something easily achieved—that elaboration requires more effort and implies some sort of superiority. Why do stamp designers generally, for instance, not treat the job in the simplest and most obvious manner—a design containing approximate elements of lettering and symbolism that will sit comfortably,reasonably, and attractively in a small rectangle? Why do they immediately create trouble by introducing an unnecessary border that will make the design still smaller, by subdividing the rectangle into awkward areas that have no relation to the given shape and that leave impossible shapes in the background? Why will they choose degenerate lettering that is practically illegible and use realistic pictorial matter that not only creates almost insuperable difficulties for the engraver, but is entirely unsuitable to the scale and purpose of the stamp? The answer is, I think, that it is still greater effort to achieve what we call "Simplicity." The problem is the same as expressing an idea verbally with clarity and brevity—but it isn't simple!

In the interests of good design and just proportion, I have lingered perhaps too long over the first section of the book, but I do feel that it is a vitaly important one and that it will be particularly interesting to those who read this review. Six artists are featured and given a rare opportunity to speak of themselves, their work, and their ideals. Russell Clark gives a thoughtful and concise account of his training and his beliefs. He interprets "Technical Skill" as something as important to Matisse as to the President of the Royal Academy. A. J. C. Fisher discusses Art as an analysis of visual impressions and as a statement of the emotional reactions resulting from visual observation. He believes that vanity and careerism spell danger and that the artist works best in obscurity. Cedric Savage, Vida Steinert, and George Woods are also presented as artist-authors.

R. J. Wagstaff writes on the Travelling Scholarship in Art, Alec McDowell, Maenad, and James Caffin on the Theatre in Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch respectively, and Stanhope Andrews on "Shadow Catching," some thoughts on Documentary Films in New Zealand. There is a section of verse chosen by A. R. D. Fairburn.

As a production, the book compares favourably with many overseas publications. It is no easy matter to bring into unity reproductions in colour, half-tone, and line, together with photographs and prints from wood and lino blocks, particularly, when different papers are necessary to bring out the best qualities of each. It must be remembered, too, that many of the half-tones are from paintings that were not only never intended for reproduction but were designed to possess that personal quality peculiar to an original that cannot be reproduced.
Cairncross (continued from p. 11)

own personality, lay many hours of sound, concentrated study of essential draughtsmanship.

Here, then, was a young artist showing promise. To the Press and public of this country his unusual painting formed a fitting counterpart to his self-assertion and eccentricity, to be looked on with an indulgent smile like the pranks of a wilful child. Beyond lay the thought that it did not do any harm and he would grow out of it anyway. At this point the French diplomatic service administered the most pointed moral lesson, of which we have in our righteousness remained oblivious, not only in taking Sam under its wing but in risking a greater gamble in granting him a scholarship than New Zealand does when it lays a quid both ways on its favourite horse.

A year is a brief span in a painter’s life and Sam has made the most of it. At the first step inside Lhote’s school in Paris Sam’s nose reacted unfavourably to its aroma of rigid formality and he decided there was better picking on the walls of the galleries. Sam’s voracious appetite to eat up from the world’s most concentrated picture collections all that would nourish his talent might have proved permanently damaging to his development. Sam survived.

His recent showing of paintings contained works old and new and proved that the French consular service has a fair for backing the right horse. Sam has returned almost a new man, and a new artist. He has exercised that choice, as every artist does, in selecting those painters of the past who, in their own day, faced like problems and solved them. He has learned immensely from Greco and Goya, while Vlaminck and Soutine have been swallowed whole. From the process of digestion, Sam himself emerges unmistakably. But Sam knows now what he wants, and in some remarkably fine pictures he gets it. There is still the pressure and drive, but controlled in a way to allow a coherent personal vision to emerge. Gone are the violent juxtapositions of raw colour, whose virtue lay mostly in its effect of energy released without direction. His drawing and his colour have lost nothing of their former exuberance and, especially in some of his street scenes, gain in strength by their control and direction to form part of an integral whole.

And now, strange to say, to all but the most elite this enfant terrible has become accepted and respectable. May he never find out!

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