

# Independent Group's Show of Very Modern Art

FROM A CORRESPONDENT

Nobody would deny that the twentieth century has been a revolutionary period in the visual arts, but it has, in one very important sense, been a "private" revolution. While every other art form has discovered the means to "recreate" itself any number of times with complete freshness (by means of the film, the book, the gramophone record), the visual arts have remained the property of a small elite which is able to see, and an even smaller one that is able to buy, the original art-object.

As the visual arts in our century have also become divorced from the environment, the actual places we walk about in,

the elements themselves, directing their energies for his own inspiration, and there are a number of artists today (such as Medalla in London, Hoenich in Israel, Piene and Kricke in Germany) who are using the elements—fire, smoke, water, sun, bubbles, sand, wind—in a new attempt to produce an art which is permanently alive and renewed.

The other stream is the one which has responded most convincingly to the nature of technological progress and industrial society, and has assumed the name "kinetic" art. "Kinetic" simply means "moving", and movement, real or illusory, is the only common factor

and there are signs today of a looming crisis in the gallery world.

It is not only that one or two big galleries have closed, or that fewer works of art are being bought and sold, or that collectors have lost faith in the seriousness of recent artistic trends, but that our conception of the nature and function of art is bursting the seams of the light-laced dealer-collector-museum ensemble.

The truth is that artists are demanding facilities of a more elaborate and, if I may use the word, more democratic kind, than the galleries are accustomed to provide. In London recently there was set up an organization called the Centre for Advanced Creative Study which, although it is still in its infancy, seems to me likely to be able to provide exactly the sort of stimulus that the art world at the moment needs—a stimulus that comes directly from the artists themselves.

## WORLD-WIDE INTEREST

The centre's director is Paul Keeler, who before launching the organization staged several eye-opening exhibitions of kinetic art in England. The centre itself has its headquarters at 92 Cornwall Gardens, S.W.7. An international exhibition currently running there, including work by artists from Britain, South America, Europe, America, and Asia, shows what new paths a highly intelligent and gifted generation of artists (many of them writers and one or two of them scientists as well) is opening up.

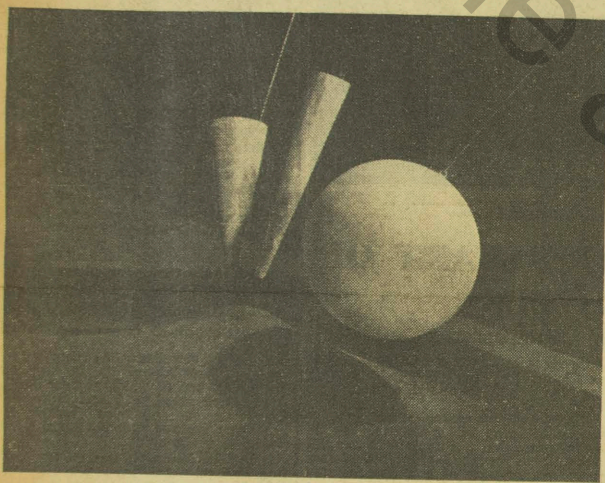
The centre has many points of contact with those of groups of avant-garde artists which have recently sprung up on the Continent—the Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel in Paris, Zero in Germany, N. & T. in Italy—but its area of activity is much wider, and in

two important particulars it takes a step forward from other similar organizations: it is both international and independent of the galleries. It aims to solve the problem of integrating the artist in the building and changing the environment by meeting it head-on—by showing industrialists, technologists and architects what use, both aesthetically and practically, such artists can be to them; and to do this, not by encouraging artists to produce autonomous "works of art" to be hung in the board-room or dotted about a patio, but enabling them to get involved with architects and technologists in the simultaneous and shared discovery of new ideas and forms.

It could also, it seems to me, supply in London a need which, as visitors to the current Tate exhibition can discover, the London Group itself once provided, of being an extra-gallery rallying point for advanced artistic ideas.

Thus primarily its work at the moment is propagandist—to attract the support of industrial, educational and cultural concerns by putting across its overall aim and the ideas and projects of its individual artists through exhibitions of their small-scale work and frequent publications. It will open a show room in Wigmore Street this autumn and will present next year a large touring exhibition tracing the history of movement in modern art from the work of pioneers such as Gabo, Moholy-Nagy, Pevsner and Calder down to the present day.

Obviously an organization such as this, however fresh and positive its ideas, stands or falls by the quality of the artists it promotes. In the opinion of the present writer the artists attached or affiliated to the centre are among the most talented at work anywhere in the world today.



Takis (Greece).

they are again not available to people at large. Information about art can be received by everybody but art itself cannot. Because of this people are robbed of the opportunity and therefore the ability to judge for themselves, and the work itself can be approached only through a maze of interpretation and classification. Today a bad picture plus an interpretation is more compelling than a masterpiece wrapped in silence, as the American critic Harold Rosenberg has derisively pointed out.

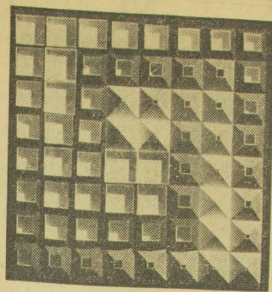
## ART EVER RENEWED

There are really two streams in very modern art which are seeking both to gain a new creative freedom for the artist and to make art accessible to anybody. They both see the artist as director rather than maker. The first is made particularly eloquent in the life, writings and paintings of the French artist Yves Klein, who died recently at a tragically early age. There is a quality about Klein's life and art which is both fascinating and almost impossible to convey in words. He wished in fact to make his life and his art indivisible. He directed the paint-soaked bodies of his models in a dance against the white canvas in order to get a "mark of life" free from the plodding labours of the brush. He used

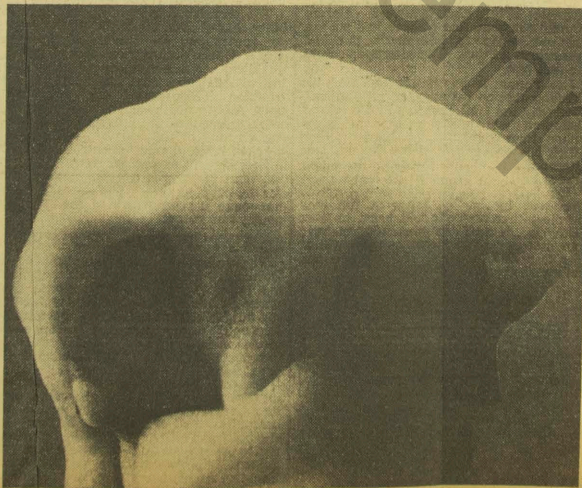
that binds together the scores of very different artists who use it. Being also essentially abstract, this work is scaleless and therefore awaits application on an environmental basis. It is impersonal in the sense that it never bears the mark of individual gesture and its aim is, by turning with love to the products of a scientific and technological society, to enable man to carry that science and technology with what Naum Gabo has called "the same ease that we carry the heart and liver in our bodies". This idea has fascinated artists since the early days of the century and the names of the pioneers of kinetic art are well known. Among the most original and talented younger artists in this field are Takis, Soto, Bury, Tingueley, Camargo, Cruz-Diez, who work in Paris, Salvadori in London, and Ueker and Macke in Germany.

## NO PROVISION MADE

Some of these artists have already worked with architects, but many of their ideas remain in project form. The trouble is that, up till now, there has been no proper promotional equipment in the art world for this sort of thing. The only way an artist can work and stay alive, unless he is to become a hack, is to sell his work through the galleries,



Keith Potts (Great Britain).



David Medalla (Philippines): "The Soul of Maldoror" (bubble machine), 1964.