

The Eye of the Storm

The Gallery, Brighton Polytechnic

When in 1917 the poet Apollinaire defended the avant garde ballet *Parade* against an outraged audience, he had a huge wound in his head and the Front, with its inconceivable horrors, was quite close to Paris. The Western Front, a landscape of blasted trees, mud, wire, craters water- and corpse-filled "uninhabitable, awful, the abode of madness" as Wilfred Owen wrote in a letter, is the imaginative focus of World War I. Here are pictures selected from the huge 1920 Royal Academy exhibition *The Nation's War Paintings*, with contemporary photographs. The show sets out to put into context the powerful modernist paintings of Paul Nash, C R W Nevinson, Wyndham Lewis, William Roberts and Stanley Spencer by hanging works by these artists with pictures by more conventional but admired contemporaries, some of them, like Connard, almost forgotten today. It also suggests other aspects of the war, at sea and in the air, apart from the lot of the infantry soldier.

The official artists scheme was part of the Propaganda Programme and artists were required to provide accurate records, occasionally using photographs to reconstruct events. Conventional draughtsmanship, for example that of Muirhead Bone, was highly valued and there are some fine drawings, among them an outstanding medical study by Tonks. The need for accuracy may limit art — Donald Maxwell saw his painstaking work as history; and sometimes an insistence on detail made for a strange sense of fantasy. Francis Dodd's drawings show figures, like Jonahs in their whales, in the bowels of submarines filled with intestinal wires.

Although the dock scenes of Pears and naval studies by Bone, Connard and Lavery have interest, the works relating to the Front have greater emotional force. The pictures of Kennington and H S Williamson are of a poetic intensity and Orpen's paintings of the trenches are deeply felt. The strongest images, whether revolutionary and futuristic or more traditional in treatment, seem to be those which suggest the symbolical correspondence between the shattered landscape and the psychological and physical effects of modern warfare on human beings (to May 27).

Simply Messing About in Boats

Brighton Art Gallery and Marina

Pleasure boating suggests the lighter side of life. Brighton has recently completed its Marina and the museum, in deference to the English Tourist Board's Maritime England Year, has produced a yachting spectacular. The title, from *The Wind in the Willows*, suggests paddling on river backwaters, but this is an exhibition mainly concerned with the south coast. The show is technical (with information about outboard motors, rigging, sails, navigation and recent yacht design), and historical. It is presented in tableaux, with a yachtclub room, an open air room with a pale northern sky and a mock up of an Edwardian deck scene. There are models, relics, trophies and figureheads, highly painted and wind- and sea-bleached.

Sailing for pleasure, introduced by Charles II on his return from exile in Holland, is another sport of kings. Enthusiasts, from the Edwardian grocer Sir Thomas Lipton to Edward Heath, have commissioned portraits of their favourite craft. Treatment varies, from the impression of a race with fast winds and torn seas, to technically accurate renderings of individual yachts. The earliest pictures are masterly drawings by William van de Velde of the pleasure boats of Charles II, stately vessels decorated with tritons, lions, unicorns and baroque ornament and which sailed swathed in flags. There are some interesting pictures, including eighteenth century paintings by Dominic and J T Serres and works by Rowlandson, several nineteenth century paintings of races and royalty at sea and a charming P Wilson Steer *Watching Cowes Regatta*. There are some elegant 1920s posters and silkscreens designed by Franco Costa for the 1980 America Cup. Giles, suggesting precariously balanced family fun, has designed the poster for this extravaganza (to Aug 30. See photo p. 228).

Pieces of Paper

Gardner Centre Gallery
Here are examples by eight papermakers (individuals and mills) and ten artists who use paper as an active part of their work. The



THE FINISH OF THE RACE FOR DOGGETT'S COAT & BADGE by Thomas Rowlandson at Brighton Art Gallery.

makers tend to produce paper for others to use, the artists' works are ends in themselves, conceived as vehicles for ideas and feelings. In this show this is the distinction between art and craft. The paper — apart from that used by Jane Womersley in her sculptural constructions and Charles Chapman's cardboard in his life-sized tractor sculpture — is hand made and varied in finish, colour and structure.

As the process of making has an intrinsic importance, the pieces by artists are characteristically carefully and patiently worked. Rebecca Lilley and Elizabeth Stuart Smith stress their concern with the plant fibres of the pulp. Julie Norris incorporated marks, impressions and fragments of newsprint into paper which she sensitises, so that in the *Camera* pieces images are in and on the ground material. Paper is in all the works transformed from bare ground to active image. Most complex are the elegant fragments of Hans Dieter Pietsch, with their exposure of the textures of plaster and tiles, from smooth to grainy, scarred or chipped, and the contemplative works of Eileen Lawrence. Both artists use meticulous watercolour and in both the distinction between the strokes of paint and the surface of paper is uncertain. The ancient craft of paper as a medium of expression is capable of carrying a variety of messages, earthy, or subtle and refined (to May 18).

Open House

8 Hollingbury Road
Here are artists showing in a domestic setting, working in various media; but with certain shared preoccupations. Ned Hoskins' recent paintings are concerned with the appearance and structure of landscape. Compositions are assembled from different viewpoints and equal emphasis is given to the near object and the distant prospect. An interest in landscape runs through all the work, which includes prints by Bob Chaplin, Richard Keeton, Peter Matthews and Clive Vosper and watercolours by John Hacker. More exotic are Chris Lowe's colour photographs of orchids and carnivorous plants, and the rustic strain finds a different expression in Nick Johnson's large-scale wooden sculpture of domestic animals. The theme of sensitivity to natural forms is extended in the ceramics of Bill Hall, in Sam Herman's glass and David Turner's silver and

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enamel pendants. These artists do not normally show as a group; but the underlying interest in natural processes, in the effects of time and change, and the respect for materials and craftsmanship makes for a rewarding mixture (to May 16).



COASTAL EVENING 1982 by Ned Hookins at Open House.

Nicholas Sinclair

Muzart Arts Centre
These photographs and related drawings are a sensitive and thoughtful exploration of a theme. 'The Reflective Surface' has as its central images glass, an invisible veil, and water, which borrows its colours from what is in and around it. Water and glass suggest the divisions and the meeting points between reality and perception. Photography depends on selection: the photographer

is concerned with the way images are found in and may be released from reality. He makes new and independent compositions, studies in the qualities of light and dark, black, grey and white, linked to the actual observed world through the looking glass of imagination. The city photographs, many of them taken in New York, use glass as an image of clarity and hardness, and as a transformer which allows for the superimposition and juxtaposition of images without logical explanation, rather in the way of elliptical poetry. The consciously symbolic lake photographs and the series of drawings, sometimes incorporating torn musical manuscript paper, seem distillations of emotion, memory and association.

As the work of the artist is shaped by the external world, art influences the perception of our surroundings. Here are echoes of Ivon Hitchens in leaf-soaked tree-hung studies of inland water, of Samuel Palmer in gleams of moonlight against dark tracery, and deliberate hints in the subway photographs of American abstract expressionists. The photographer, in his search for the image, is conscious of the varied and complex levels and layers of perception (to May 22).

Other Festival Exhibitions

Christopher Johnson, *The Grange, Rottingdean*. Paintings, including many local landscapes, among them some atmospheric and expressionistic compositions based on downland and field (to May 30).

Tichborne Studios 17 and 18 Tichborne Street co-operative open to the public during the Festival.

The John Grain Studios 112 Upper Lewes Road design studios open during the Festival.

St George's Church Arts and Crafts Exhibition St George's Church Kempton (to May 16).

Sussex County Arts Club Exhibition Bond Street Cottages, Bond Street (to May 8).

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