

# Cynthia Ball doesn't know who to please

By Richard Cheales

THE EXHIBITION: Water Colours by Cynthia Ball (Lidchi Art Gallery, small gallery, Twist Street and Bree Street);  
Group Show by African artists (Gallery Michaelangelo, King's Ransom Building, Wolmarans Street, Joubert Park);  
Oil, Wool and Beadwork Paintings, by Susanna Geyer (Marl. Bowen Gallery, 3 Barnston Road, Greenside).

CYNTHIA BALL has attained enviable softness, fluidity and spontaneity in her delightful water colours.

Technically, it is the forthright paintings — No. 18, No. 22, 24 and No. 3 — that command attention. In them, one finds immediate statement, with no emphasizing the gossamer-delicate detail afterwards.

"Cosmos" and "Trees and Water" fall more into the charm category.

In such paintings, the artist skilfully exploits her delightful and delicate touch by — afterwards — hazing colour here, emphasizing shape there, or building in (rather like Russell Flint) washes of superimposed tones somewhere else.

All very permissible and illustrative of the artist's technical dexterity. Yet the sting of strength in the first mentioned

works implies that Cynthia Ball might have reached a stage where she must decide whether to please others with her very delicate ability, or to please herself with the strength and straightforward application that might not so readily appeal to the public — which, anyway, knows little about the technical qualities.

Were she to deliberately scorn the charm element, it would allow her work to fall into the outstanding class rather than have it continue in an exceptionally competent, but daintily charming way.

Ben Macala easily dominates this exhibition by African artists because of his established and individualistic style.

In contrast with Macala's assurance, faint stiltedness touches much of the other work, with Shikaloe's graphic compositions standing out for their bold but eerie black and white drawing, a selection of small water colours by Maseko showing strange subject matter but a brisk touch with pigment and M'Batha drawing with fierceness and line economy.

Susanna Geyer shows rather astonishing ingenuity in her tapestries, with tiny beads and sequins glistening from the embroidered patterns.

Compositions abound, in a variety of styles and unusual "pigments," with varying degrees of success.

Panels with fish, a peacock, a honeybird beside an aloe bloom, have the artist working with variegated beads, gaining the most effective colour nuances possible with shell-soft, changing tones.

Macala,  
Shikaloe,  
Maseko,  
M'Batha.

The original is under Cynthia Ball.