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ENTERTAINMENT AND THE ARTS



LIDCHI GALLERY WAS A SURPRISE

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LIDCHI ART GALLERY, in 1970, was something of a surprise packet. There was a reaching out, in the selection of exhibitions, for a more acceptable and varied choice of shows, from the public point of view.

Indeed, this gallery seems the first to have suspected a wind of change in the art world. If all the shows were not as technically first-rate as in the past, at least Lidchi Art Gallery is attempting to bridge the ever widening gap between too modern art and a disinterested public.

Louis Maqhubela's enchanting exhibition ended a year that was always interesting, with occasional delightful surprises. Five of these surprises were exhibitions by women artists. Margaret McKeen held a first one-woman show that, though faintly raw from a colour contrasting point of view, showed both power and imagination.

Olivia Watson had neat, modern panels that did not appear half as deeply ruminative and sincere, at a superficial glance, as they really were.

Stella Shawzin had some metal sculpture that was, at times, exquisite in its intricate filigree. Elvira Buder, unknown in Johannesburg, had some paintings on Perspex that were delicate, imaginative and delightfully decorative.

An outstanding exhibition was held by Erica Berry. Her first one-woman show for several years, it would have been the finest in 1970 had she not tried too many abstract ideas.

Chris van den Berg, with intricate compositions of figures and shapes, like vast African tapestries; Cyril Fradan, with cheeky cartoons, in oils, of Old Masters; Ben Ma-

cala showing an ever expanding ability to depict his people with haunting beauty; and Ben Arnold with some grippingly effective sculpture were other artists who exhibited in this gallery in 1970.

Again, one must applaud the crisp, clear thinking of Harold Jeppe, the power behind Lidchi Art Gallery, for feeling a way towards more vitally varied exhibitions in 1970, than has been the pattern in galleries in the past.

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It was rather an uneventful year in Pieter Wenning Gallery. There was, as always, a stressing of only the best in, mainly, realistic work.

In a sense, the "inbetween" exhibitions of stock paintings were often as vital as the occasional official exhibitions.

Barbara Jeppe's show of aloe paintings (which coincided with the publication of "South African Aloes") was disciplined and competent.

The same can be said of Kenneth Newman's bird studies, where amazing attention to detail caused one to marvel without being particularly

moved.

Paintings and drawings by Sir William Russel Flint gave an opportunity once again to realize what an exquisite draughtsman this master of watercolour was.

But this show perhaps prevented deeper appreciation of Francis Russel Flint's watercolours, exhibited at the end of 1970. The superlative talent of the father seemed a little muted and hesitant in the son.

Even so, such skilful, large and disciplined watercolours are unique in a world where discipline is impatiently brushed aside.

In his way, Clement Serneels dominated Pieter Wenning Gallery in 1970. There was always something by this outstanding Belgian artist (who lives in the Cape) to be seen in the gallery.

His small group of work, done in Madagascar, illustrated his ease and briefness in "drawing" landscapes in flowing oils. But his exquisite flower studies showed more dramatically the artist's mastery technique aligned with a more sensitive awareness of exquisite colour nuances and contrasts.