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Anna

1963/4

John B. Vallely, born in ~~Armagh~~, studied in Belfast and Edinburgh.

During the years 1961 - 62 he exhibited in Dublin, Edinburgh and Belfast.

(C.E.M.A. open competition).

To categorise the earlier paintings of J.B. Vallely is to place them in a school of social realism. The painter realises a social necessity; work. The festering bed of unemployment, Belfast, produced in him a painter aware of society's illness. His paintings, not literal observations of a situation, are a treatise on the problem of unemployment and its causes.

His adoption of Yeats's dictum, that only as a true product of one's own environment does one achieve universality, lead him to subscribe to the belief of both Yeats and Dylan Thomas, that art is vouchsafe.

Because of an identification with his country he studied, in detail, the history of Ireland from pre - Christian times up to the Anglo-Irish literary revival. He found an affiliation with Diego Rivera and the Mexican Mural painters, who returned to ancient Indian Architectural wall decoration despising the easel painting of the European Schools but having absorbed European techniques.

The influence of the Mexican School was one of example only. In Mexico he found a situation similar to that which exists in Ireland. Avoiding the dangers of imitation which is widespread in Irish painting at the moment, he turned to drawing Celtic crosses and fragments.

He reinterpreted the form of Celtic abstract decoration. For a complete understanding of each period of Celtic art and the mode of Celtic thought he revived his childhood interest in the Irish language, giving rise to a period of mythical imagery. In the language itself he found flowing movement and intricate rhythms which become more and more apparent in his painting.

Irish literature is the impetus behind his painting at the moment but knowledge of methods and techniques he draws from the abstract expressionists. Aesthetically they lack control, in that they present no absolute image.

Three influences, Celtic art and literature, the Mexican mural school and the abstract expressionists have brought to bear on his recent painting a control lacking in his earlier work.

... A.W.D.

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