

GALLERY A

25.2.70

# Arts and entertainment

## Promises for the 70s

Promises made by five regular exhibitors at Gallery A contribute this week to the most artistically-serious introduction we've yet had to the 1970's.

The exhibition is not a group showing — those participating are intentionally as disparate as they are geographically separated (Sydney, New York, Melbourne...). What does give the showing a special unity is that each artist represented has an established reputation behind him — in differing

quarters and of differing strengths — for which the next five years will prove crucial.

Of the five artists showing — Paul Partos, Peter Clarke, Mike Johnson, Clement Meadmore and Guy Stuart — the work of the last-named is the most compelling.

Stuart's most persistent formal motive, the disc, is now no longer confined to the questionable restraints imposed on it by the painted rectangle shape. Here, in the second of his two exhibits, it writhes amidst fibreglass corrugations on the floor. The result is a release

### ART/ANN GALBALLY

of energy, yet with its own formal organisation, that is unmatched by the other exhibitors.

By enforcing a studied object-viewer relationship, the transparent black linen frames of Paul Partos tend to suffer from an inherent theatricality. At best they are lesser examples of an undoubted talent. The two Meadmore sculptures are interesting as examples of an assimilation of American sculptor Tony Smith's predilection for simple geometrical order.

Peter Clarke is consistently rewarding. Of the two examples shown here, the large white minimal work, at once meditative and questioning, is completely satisfying. On the other hand, Mike Johnson's color essays, using shape as form are closest to the Partos screens in their tendency to strong self-assertion. (Gallery A, 275 Toorak Rd., South Yarra).

This creative intensity is sustained at Strines Gallery by sculptor Clive Murray-White. His essays and notes on a single form, the dome, have the quality of an abstract contemplation of the essential form. The idea has as much value as the shape it takes. Hence the variety of materials, polythene, alabaster, marble and silk, through which Murray-White questions the fundamentals of plane, dome and curve.

He is most explicit with the three circular shapes in blue silk showing stages of progression from a flat disc to a small, bellowing air-

filled dome. Not for the uninitiated. (Strines Gallery, cnr. Rathdown and Faraday sts., Carlton.)

While there's nothing very new about Basil Hardley's "New Wave" paintings, his highly colored oils, squeezed straight from the tube, are gay and friendly.

Karel Appel's influence is strong in Hardley's technique and much of his imagery. But the works have their own firm, if busy, structure. (Munster Arms Gallery 102-104 Little Bourke Street.)

Etchings and aquatints by John Neeson at the Crossley St. Gallery bring sobriety to the point of gloom. Imagery is kept to a minimum while Neeson concentrates on developing the range of his medium. His "Temples" and "Monuments" evolve out of and are bound by the exigencies of technique. Black and brown-bronze on white create strong textural effects, but only intensify an already strong tendency towards introversion. (Crossley St., Melbourne.)

Pottery by New Zealander Len Castle includes originally shaped vases for native grasses, some bilobed, and hanging vases with effectively impressed decoration. By contrast, the more conventional shapes — coffee sets, stew pots and dishes — are far less interesting. (The Craft Centre, 309 Toorak Rd., South Yarra.)

## See a famous work of art

A working sketch for one of Sir Russell Drysdale's most famous paintings, **Moody's Pub**, will be auctioned by Christie's at "The Age" Gallery on March 6.

Moody's Pub now hangs in the National Gallery of Victoria and was completed by Drysdale in 1941.

The working sketch is lot 56b. It is signed and Drysdale used colored crayon, pen and pencil.

The sketch is one small but extremely important item in the auction of Australian historical and contemporary drawings and paintings at "The Age" Gallery.

Another extremely important item is lot 56a, Sir William Dobell's **Lydia With Hair in Pins**, now the

property of J. O. Fairfax of Sydney.

Lydia With Hair in Pins is signed and dated '63 on board 44½ inches by 27 inches.

James Gleeson, in his book "William Dobell", writes: "Lydia is a figment of Dobell's imagination. No such woman exists. No one modelled for it."

"Yet she is as vividly alive as one of Dickens' most sharply drawn characters and, being wholly a creature of Dobell's mind, she tells us a great deal about her creator.

"Her name, according to her creator, is Lydia Dustbin, and she is very fond of dogs."

The auction at "The Age" Gallery will certainly be one of the most important and comprehensive sales of Australian art, books and historical documents ever held.

The famous auctioneers, Christie's, of London, will perform the sales.

Page

28.7.70