

Round the London Art Galleries

By ERIC NEWTON

THE present exhibition of Expressionist paintings and drawings at Roland, Browse and Delbanco's inevitably tempts one to divide artists into categories. A debate ensues in which one's casual, illogical self urges 'Ignore categories; treat your pictures as manifestations of individual attitudes of mind'. To which one's analytical self replies, with some justification, 'The understanding of attitudes of mind must precede the understanding of the works of art that express them. How can one enjoy an Expressionist picture without knowing what Expressionism means?' As a conscientious critic I am inclined to accept any suggestion made by my analytical self.

One can make a rough division of artists into Expressionists—men who externalise their feelings—and Impressionists—men who depend upon their eyesight. Monet, we agree, paints what he sees, Kokoschka what he feels, and it is stupid to complain that the latter is too frenzied or the former too literal. But labels are only helpful in extreme cases. What interests me, in touring the numerous current exhibitions, is to decide about borderline cases. What attitude of mind, for example, lies behind the colourful organisations of Ivon Hitchens at the Leicester Galleries? Of the pictures by Alan Reynolds at the Redfern Galleries? Of Affandi's (a young Indonesian painter) at the Imperial Institute? Of Tirzah Garwood's at the Arts Council Gallery in St. James's Square?

I have picked these artists from the mass of contemporary painters now exhibiting in London because each of them presents his own problem in an extreme form. Each has something definite to say, each says it with considerable conviction, and each demands from the spectator a sympathetic understanding which the critic must be prepared to define. In the absence of such definition the work of art may fail to produce its full impact.

an artist whose feelings *dictate* his form. There is nothing here of Kokoschka's frenzy or Hitchens' lyrical elegance, but a dogged determination to reject essentials and to seize on essentials and reduce them to a formalised organisation in space. The result is a stark, rather wiry world but a convincing one which the eye can explore with considerable satisfaction. Mr. Reynolds is young and his range of expression is limited, but I have the impression that here is a creative mind, working tentatively at present, but full of potentialities and capable of growth.

Affandi, at the Imperial Institute, is a Javanese artist but with no perceptible Indonesian tradition behind him. Self-taught, wilder even than Kokoschka when excited, as human and as passionate as van Gogh, painting recklessly from the heart and ready to paint whatever moves him—landscapes, animals, friends, relations; chance-met personages—his drawings are powerful, his paintings vary from the painfully undisciplined to the restlessly volcanic. He is the perfect example of the Expressionist, capable of falling into every Expressionist trap and of scaling a good many of the Expressionist heights.

The late Tirzah Garwood (Arts Council Gallery) possessed one of those little talents that are precious because they are so simple and so unambitious. She suggests a child at large in an adult

world by which she is neither frightened nor puzzled. Her eyes were innocent, which makes her look, superficially, like a Sunday painter: but her heart, being equally innocent, fills her paintings with childish excitement. Certainly not an Expressionist, for Expressionists are never innocent: nor an Impressionist, for they never let their hearts influence them. There is a third kind of artist—the naive Romantic—who can never belong to either category.

Among the numerous mixed exhibitions two deserve special mention. One is a collection of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century French



'Wee Wack's Kitten', by Tirzah Garwood, from the exhibition at the Arts Council Gallery