

Alton Art Society's 50th annual exhibition

ALTON Art Society's 50th Annual Exhibition was opened by Mr. Ewart Ings at the Assembly Rooms on Tuesday afternoon and remains open until tomorrow (Saturday, October 10th).

Visitors on Tuesday were welcomed by chairman, Mr.

Patrick Edwards, who said: "We should pay tribute to those who founded the society, those who kept it alive and those who built it up to what it is now."

He mentioned in particular Mr. Percy Cox, who has been a member for 55 years, Miss

Nora Coggin and Lady Charlotte Bonham-Carter, president of the society for the last 35 years.

Lady Bonham-Carter praised all the 200 entries and seemed especially impressed with the children's exhibits which she said were "magical and incredible flights of fantasy".

Mr. Ings, clerk to the town council and long time supporter of the art society, said it was "a great honour" to be

asked to open the 50th exhibition. He gave a short witty speech in which he compared members of local authorities to famous artists and finished saying, "I should imagine you are extremely well satisfied with the results."

The Alton Art Society was founded in 1925 at an inaugural meeting called by Mr. W. Hugh Curtis, curator of the Curtis Museum. Sir Robert Baden-Powell was the first president and remained so until his death in 1941. The first exhibition was held in 1926 but activities were suspended in March 1940 until the end of the war.



Lady Charlotte Bonham-Carter, president of Alton Art Society, Mr. Ewart Ings, and show secretary Mrs. Taylor, with the winning entry in the 12-14 years old category from Eggar's School.

ALTON Art Society has its 50th Annual Exhibition, in the Assembly Rooms this week. (The society has been holding such exhibitions for 56 years, but there was a gap during the war.) I would love to have seen the first one, for comparison; I doubt if the then members would be too surprised, still less shocked, by the present one, because the Alton Art Society show, whatever its qualitative merits, is firmly traditional in approach.

The exhibition is divided into sections, "Oils and Acrylics",

"Watercolours, Pastels, Gouaches, Drawings, Screen Prints, etc.", "Pottery and Sculpture, etc.", plus a show of work by children from local schools.

GOOD QUALITY

The overall quality of the "Oils and Acrylics" is quite high; the vast majority of the pictures in this section are of places, together with a few flowers and other still-life subjects, and two or three portraits.

G. W. James has two striking pictures, with rich, thickly painted skies, full of agitation and movement, quite different from anything else in this show. So too are the Australian landscapes of Patrick Edwards, the red earth, the unusual trees and rocks, the feeling — well put over — of sheer space.

R. L. Bickerdike's "A Summer at Clays" is nicely simplified, and I like the pattern of fields in Molly Dinwiddie's "Lowland Shower". Molly also has a very good still life, not entirely unrelated to Braque's "After the Meal". Philippa Dorling has a lively, colourful "Village Wedding Feast, Corfu", and Harwood Eve uses good, rich colours in a well-seen "Cafe in Elba".

Dorothy Dean's "Woman with Dried Flowers" is up to the standard we expect from this artist, so, too, is Mary Towsey's single, simple, bold "Sunflower".

The "Watercolours etcetera" provide more variety of subject matter, as well as of treatment. Joan Wingate has

the best animal portrait in the show in her strong head of "Canis Lupus" (wolf to you and me); Viola Peacock remains unsurpassed in her flower studies, though others are getting nearer to her quality; Betty Haggard, too, sets high standards in her pen, ink and wash drawings of buildings and street scenes.

I was particularly attracted by the silk screen prints of Guy Vaesen. These are unusual, distinctive, and of high quality. Perhaps my favourite is that of the façade of a building in "New York", with its subtle use of blue, brown, yellow and buff printings. A mention, too, for Evelyn Mathias's pen and ink "Sea Urchins" (children, if you haven't guessed), L. H. P. Wilding's sepia "Old Brewery, Alton," with its good feeling for shapes, and J. Villiers's ambitious, if not wholly successful, "Models".

LESS CHILD ART

There is little "Pottery and Sculpture, etc." (but lots of "etceteras"!); Margaret Colson has most of the pottery, several good pieces. More is on view at the other end of the room on a table marked "items to be taken away" — since each bears a price tag, I imagine prior payment is required!

Likewise, there is much less children's work this year, several schools who have previously sent in interesting work being conspicuous by their absence. A pity. What there is is good and lively, and the prizes seem to have been correctly awarded (i.e. I agree with the judges). I was particularly taken with "Click", the winning entry in the 12-14 year old section, a large pencil drawing in nine sections, each completed by a different pupil from a fourth year group at Eggar's School.

Finally, though it was the first thing that struck me, the display is improved this year, the screens freshly painted, and additional lighting having been provided. It certainly makes the whole show look fresher and brighter than before. This 50th annual exhibition of the Alton Art Society continues until tomorrow (Saturday), open 10.30 to 7 daily. — P.J.S.

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