

EVG POST WGTON

A painter to 30/9/82 be watched

By Avenal McKinnon

After one-and-a-half years in Australia, Christchurch-born Euan MacLeod is presenting his most recent paintings and drawings at an exhibition at the Bowen Galleries.

From the pure abstractions of his fine arts years (1977-1979 at Canterbury) Euan MacLeod has moved into terse figurative works — a confrontation of people in a white hot land bleached by the sun.

He has the energetic, livid brushstrokes of expressionism, at times texturally over-emphasised, but enlivened by an original colour sense combined with the urgency of abstract expressionism.

His figures, direct slashes of colour, harshly drawn, elongated or even reduced to shadowy presences enact a drama of human tension.

In "Flesh and Blood" the green siren-like girl defiantly ignores the Baconian

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putrefying carcass on the ground beside her.

"Long White" sets the easy strength of the New Guinean and his assimilation with the land against the cringing form of the white man.

"Unaware/Aware," "Stay Depart," "On The Beach" and "Snake Bite" have a strong narrative current with the sequential feeling of cinematographic stills.

"Snake Bite" is a powerful composition.

Originally based on a photograph it is largely autobiographical — the artist "snake bitten" stares from the canvas while the girl turns away, her face a series of jolting colour accents.

The tension is accentuated by the slash of peach-coloured cloud in the clear sky and the dripped blood-let shadows in the foreground.

It is the old theme of temptation and beguilement, a modern Adam and Eve.

Euan MacLeod has combined the distortions of expressionism with the images of mass media in a manner vaguely reminiscent of de Kooning.

At 26 MacLeod is a painter to be watched.

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Bowen Galleries offered a different type of excitement. Erstwhile Cantabrian Euan MacLeod gave a masterly display of talent from across the Tasman. He graduated from Canterbury University in 1979 after having earlier completed a graphic design course at the Technical Institute. Armed with the competence these two scholastic achievements provide it seems inevitable that his talents would be snapped up outside the country. Sydney Museum is the gainer.

MacLeod's 29 paintings and drawings are a most welcome influx into Wellington. There is a breadth and scale that renews faith in the ability of our younger artists to make inroads into what has become rather a tired scene.

MacLeod's technique is broad, his colour strong. There is the feel of large brushes slashing across taut canvas depositing rich texture and capturing the fleeting moment, impressionistically. There is vision and originality. Most canvases comprise two figures, either light-skinned balanced against dark or larger against smaller.

No 27 with its supporting drawing No 16, Maternal, has the mother's long shadow linking a tiny tot across a wide expanse of sunlit beach. Long White, the comparison of genetic racial silhouettes against a wide expanse of landscape; Real Men, the muscular striving to attain added stature against the weak.

This is one of those rare opportunities to see work that has immediate impact and that holds the attention throughout.