



BRIAN SEWELL on what's wrong with young art

# How do you get it home?



Close your eyes and . . . Ross Sinclair's star statement and a sculpture by Erica Forster.

machismo of her tutor, but her phallic "Sir Cockerel" would perhaps have been more effective at the height of nine inches rather than nine feet—not the sort of thing you could take home on the Underground.

As for the few bright stars—I have seen better pictures by Paul Gough, who is going through an awkward transitional stage but is still worth watching.

Neil Davies deserves a prize for his image of the conflict of love and work, the consummately beautiful handling of paint only slightly marred by infelicities of drawing.

Ian Darragh transfers the fashionable dirty mackintosh mysteries of Balthus from girls to boys.

Gordon Scott's "Exploiter" is unlovely but compelling. And I don't quite know what I would do with Jane Cadle's "Dog's Dinner," but anyone who can neatly transmogrify so many pairs of shoes into such alien and erotic forms with such cool understatement, must be encouraged.

Give yourself time to ignore the flurry and mechanical absurdities, close your eyes to the tiresome, silly and obtrusive video contraptions, and with luck the few things of quality will emerge, undiminished by the company they keep in this bazaar.

● Fresh Art, at The Barbican Centre (Concourse Gallery), EC2, until August 31. Monday-Saturday, 11-8, Sunday and bank holidays, noon-8. Admission free.

"This is our art. Useless, boring, impotent, élitist, and very very beautiful." THUS proclaims the legend on a five-pointed star, two yards wide, constructed of wood, perspex and flashing lights by 20-year-old Ross Sinclair in the Barbican's current show.

I cannot imagine what he is very very beautiful. His vast exhibition of his work, but he is dead to get with his "useless, boring, impotent and élitist" statement.

Among the work of more than 100 art students there is depressingly little of any real quality, and far too much that will alienate the very buyers to whom the show is addressed.

Young artists are their own worst enemies. Certain sure that the world is just waiting for their unleashed talents, they beaver away at vast canvases and huge dilapidating sculptures suitable only for exhibition in the empty wastes of the Hayward Gallery—public statements for public places.

Great scale seems to convince them of their own greatness, yet most of what they do could as well be done in small, losing its arrogant pomp but perhaps gaining in wit.



Mysteries . . . detail from Ian Darragh's Figure At A Curtain.

Small scale has other advantages, for coming to terms with the 8ft ceiling and the two-room flat would infinitely broaden the band of patronage—this is a selling exhibition and you are meant to go with your cheque book.

I cannot understand why, when most art students come from conventional middle and working-class backgrounds, they work as though accustomed to the marble halls of Buckingham Palace. It is they, not hopeful patrons, who are the élitists.

The Tate Gallery and the Arts Council must take some responsibility, for both so consistently exhibit work that can only exist in public places, that we are conditioned to expect great heaps of rubbish, broken furniture, flashing lights, old car tyres, bricks, stones and acres of unprimed canvas waving in the breeze—sculpture that might sit on a desk or mantelpiece has long vanished, together with pic-

tures that might fit above the upright Broadwood.

Half the commercial dealers in London don't care a damn for the ordinary private buyer—they pitch their stock at public galleries and the Saatchis of this world, both in scale and cost.

So what is the student to do? Naturally he follows suit, hopeless though that course may be, and paternal, indulgent, incompetent and uncritical teachers, safely entrenched in jobs that protect them from the hurly-burly of commercial life, let them get on with it.

The consequence is that the small-scale, small-purse, private collector has virtually died out—he spends his money on old art instead of taking a chance long-shot on some new youngster.

But in ignoring his needs and constraints it is the youngster himself who denies this patron the opportunity for patronage.

This exhibition has been put together by a dealer, Nicholas Treadwell, and I wholeheartedly commend the

notion of putting 200 works of art up for sale in so well-trodden a setting as the Barbican.

Anything that attempts a fresh commercial purpose for students and puts their work before a wider audience, must be good for all concerned, but so much of the material is striving, effortful, untidy, assertive and impractical, as well as useless, boring, impotent and élitist.

## Machismo

The overall impression is of Dada and Surrealist jokes half a century behind the times, and of the Royal Academy Summer Show of 10 years hence.

Too much is just big. What on earth can be the lasting pleasure in a six-yard-wide circle of storks endlessly not delivering their babies?

Maria Mouloud may be having problems with the