

Paris

Extract from

art and artists

LONDON

Date - JAN 1972

SEE OVERLEAF

5700
The Paris Biennale of young artists was quite an event – besides Leger's and Bacon's retrospective exhibitions in the Grand Palais and, of course, Picasso's 90th anniversary celebrated with a ten day show at the Louvre. But the latter events as the deeds of the older generation already belong to the (living) past. So how does the present look and what can we hope from the future? The reply is: there is no hope – *lasciate ogni speranza*. The young artist is against: against art, against tradition, against past and present. Conceptual art, the theme of this year's Biennale, gave us a depressing vision of life, of all human creation – ephemeral, like our modern environment polluted, decaying, decomposing, terrifying, hopeless.

The enormous tent, or rather hangar, in the Parc de Vincennes was filled with various work by young artists of various nationalities. The exhibition showed art as a mode of life: the life of canned music, processed image, processed food amid polluted nature. Life with no hope; just anger, anxiety and anarchy. There was a certain masochistic sadness in the 'hyper-realistic' paintings (some done with skill and sensitivity, some very vulgar) and in the other conceptual works of mixed media. The morbid atmosphere continued into the painting and sculpture exhibits. Oddly enough, artists from more affluent countries – the United States, Germany, other West European and some South American nations – show more pessimism in their hyper-expressionistic vision, than those from poorer countries like Cuba, the Philippines, Turkey, Ivory Coast, or Senegal. There a painter not so preoccupied with social and theoretical problems is not ashamed to use paint and brushes simply to make pictures, some really beautiful like the pre-Picassian compositions of Amadou Seck (Senegal) or the bizarre 'icons' of Cabrera (Guatemala).

Still the overall impression was of gloom and anarchy. One would like to shout with the young Greek artist, Maria Karavela, who showed a wooden cell with patches of red paint as blood and black scribbled words 'au secour' – 'help'. Most of the exhibits were not specially striking or original. The humourless repetitions of old Dada gestures in oversized collages, assemblages or happenings are no more fun and bring nothing new, refreshing or vital with their naive

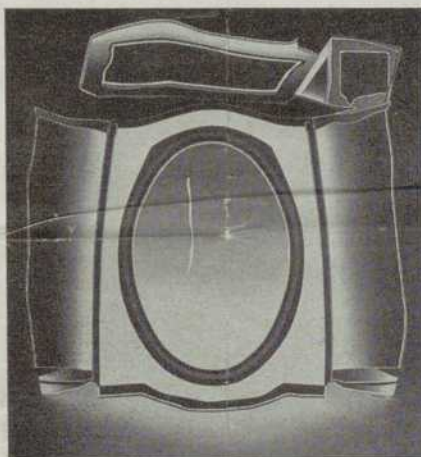
pseudo-scientific, pseudo-philosophy. Nevertheless in general the works were a warning to the over-commercialised, over-technical civilisation with its still growing mechanisation.

Exhibitions in private Paris galleries were also part of the Biennale's programme. At Ileana Sonnabend's, Calzolari's delicate neon compositions represented 'arte povera'. The Japanese sculptor Kudo (Galerie Mathias Fels) exhibited 'hyper-realistic' little plastic gardens, where the species biologically degenerated by pollution were growing as bizarre, repulsive, frightening 'fauno-flora'.

Similar feeling of uncontrolled anarchy could be found also in Malaval's sculptures at the C.N.A.C. and Galerie Gervis. Ado (Galerie Arnaud) and five other Japanese artists at the Galerie Lambert showed pictures of very different character, but all painted with rare subtlety. I liked Ado's strongly coloured lunar landscapes; black, umbrella-like forms on a white background by Akira Asai, and the delicate grey shadows of Yoichi Nakazawa.

I found the works of the young American Deborah Remington (Darthea Speyer) specially interesting. They were reminiscent of hard-edge paintings, if not for their equivocal, flowing forms, not at all geometrical, yet concise and strongly defined. Though enclosed in the precise contours of line and colour, these shapes have some mysterious, poetical content. The tones of black, opaque white and hard metallic greys are emphasised by deep wine red and sombre green accents. Sometimes the oval forms are like a mirror where the reflection of objects suddenly vanishes under the pearly luminous surface.

Jean Dewasne's paintings (Galerie Creuzevault) are rigorous elementary geometric forms composed of vivid, pure colours. His sculptures painted or enamelled are more complex, more



top to bottom:

Deborah Remington **Seneca** 1971

Galerie Darthea Speyer

Yannis Gaitis **La Mise en Boite** 1971

Galerie Arts/Contacts