

PICTURES ON EXHIBIT
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FEBRUARY is a rich month, but most important among the riches is the great exhibition of Rauschenberg at the Whitechapel Gallery, unquestionably the largest display of the artist (including the decoration of the Stedelijk) seen outside the U. S. Besides the entire Dante Inferno series, these are key pictures from every stage of Rauschenberg's career. One can wander at will between freestanding cockerels, outstanding kitchen chairs, the transferences of lifesize newsprint cuts, and *carrés* of anarchic paint, to the point when the most hardened cynic will see in all this turbulence and ferocity a new dimension in aesthetics. This is an artistic experience on the highest level. For me, at least, Rauschenberg offers a release of the kind attributed to Pollock, but which I have not undergone from the work of that veteran or any other American artist.

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FRANCES RICHARDS, who shows this month at the Leicester Galleries, is the antithesis of her husband Ceri. The attenuated women and children of her small-format tempera works are as poetically feminine as Ceri Richards' tormented echos of Delacroix and heavily-scored visuals of Debussy's sunken cathedral are vibrantly masculine. Mrs. Richards works near to the wood. Her paintings are clean like Ben Nicholson's are clean. Chance also once led her to needlework. Some of these experiments are included in the show. Her colours keep to earth tints and a few pale fugitive greens

and yellows. Spring-like pictures for the Season.

Mary Martin's work at the Molton is nearer to her husband's. Kenneth Martin, famous for his screw mobiles and twisted towers of metal rods, is in harmony with her metal reliefs. The new Mary Martins are an extension of her earlier work in wood (last seen in the World Tomorrow exhibition on the site by the National Gallery). Now that they are transformed into metal, her intentions are clearer than hitherto. Concavities shine and reflect in a way that could never be achieved in the wooden shadow complexities.

Joe Tilson has forgotten canvas and, although his wooden constructions are still called "paintings", the new works are nearer sculpture than easel pictures. The latest are enlivened by primary paint, but even so it is hard to see how much further one can get from painting in the widely understood sense of the word. Tilson used to work in thick impasto. The same spirit invests his wooden work. Every detail is large. The exhibition at the New London Gallery starts with Brancusi-like simplicities of the early wooden shapes and ends up among the latest contraptions of pure "pop" albeit in abstract terms.

Tilson is about as far removed from Craigie Aitchison as a packing-case from fairyland. Aitchison works in a thin wistful pigment, generally on miniature scale. His third exhibition at the Beaux-Arts holds few surprises for those who know his work, although