

# A LINE FROM THE TOWER OF BABBLE | NORMAN RAE

DAVID BOXER, Curator of the National Gallery of Jamaica and member of the Selection Committee for the Annual National Exhibition of Painting, Drawing and Sculpture, which opened Tuesday evening at Devon House, offered spectators his personal reaction to the assembled look of the fifty-one pieces on display. He found the show disappointing overall. (He wasn't wrong in that)

His main charge: it didn't seem representative of current goings on in the island's art world. He felt that perhaps in future a watch should be set up year round throughout the island to keep tag on developments and to note work for each year's exhibition.

One understands his eagerness to achieve more comprehensive reflection but, apart from the practical difficulties involved — selectors' dedication and tastes; art work often get sold in the meantime (if they're any good) and move to heavens which may not wish to release them; the fear that one might wind up with yet another 'festival' potpourri — one wonders whether the answer doesn't lie in another direction.

Certainly, the National Gallery's annual exhibit open to all and sundry should develop once more into the premier artistic event of the year with every painter, sculptor, draughtsman, falling over each other to get in. Once more — since indeed in days of yore (how tempted one is to use 'halcyon days') that was just about the status this Annual Exhibition achieved at the Institute of Jamaica before the rot set in there.

The rot set in, as far as I can recall, mainly because of the fads that became fashion for promoting this or that oppressed group or this or that 'national' sense or the products of this or that institution. You know, the process of artistic creation is an odd thing. Technique, otherwise known as craft, competence in one's medium, there must be; and then the mind and the sensitivities that transform the subject into a work of some validity. We seek the vision of the artist to expand our own experience. Dogma comes daily from other sources.

What happened towards the end of the Institute series: many of the more competent ceased to submit work and simultaneously (quantity rather than quality?) a good deal of rubbishy

stuff filled the walls. Was it an honour to put one's best work forward and have it selected or was it the equivalent of a jumble sale?

One answer to the current problem, and it'll take a long time, lies in building back the prestige of the Annual Exhibition. Then you won't have to go scouring the countryside for illustrations of activity. Artists would want to participate and with their best pieces. Fortunately, our history is such that we don't really have an 'academic' stream versus an individualistic as, for example, when the battle for 'modern' art side by side with the academicians was on in other countries.

Our artists seem all in the same river course by and large not overly conventional and yet (again a wide generalisation) not intellect-powered enough to operate in the totally abstract. We're somewhere comfortably in between with a few intensely personal glosses. It's not unlike the social structure: one never had an aristocracy or a real upper class (in European stratification terms); at best, an upper middle-class.

So, the Annual Exhibition doesn't have to become an academic Academy show and nobody's critical evaluation currently operate in that compartment away. It does, however, need to insist on showing only good paintings, drawings or sculpture; thereby to demonstrate high standards sufficient once again to prove magnetic.

On this basis, the current collection might well have decreased by some thirty per cent even if the gracious walls appeared a bit bare. Perhaps conditioned by asking prices or other constraints — hopefully so — the Purchase Awards (acquisitions for the National Gallery from the exhibits) are something of a joke.

NOW THAT THAT LITTLE ESSAY is over and in case you may have thought otherwise: the Exhibition IS worth a visit. There are a number of pleasing pieces to look at, the drawings altogether giving a better impression than the paintings, the sculpture fairly ignorable. Hope Brooks, with her link to mother earth, dresses her glamorously on this occasion with white cement and iridescent paint in 'Shell With Grey And Yellow Markings'.

Sam Brown, in naive style, achieves a warm brownish pinky glow in his group of little houses

on a hill, 'Peace Ville'. (Interestingly enough, the exhibition contains little 'social consciousness' and deals rather with timeless matters and tranquility in this troubled world; maybe a re-pressentation of things that do not or should not change). Eric Cadieu contributes two brightly coloured minimally representational cartoons, 'The Depress' and 'Spirit of the Depress'.

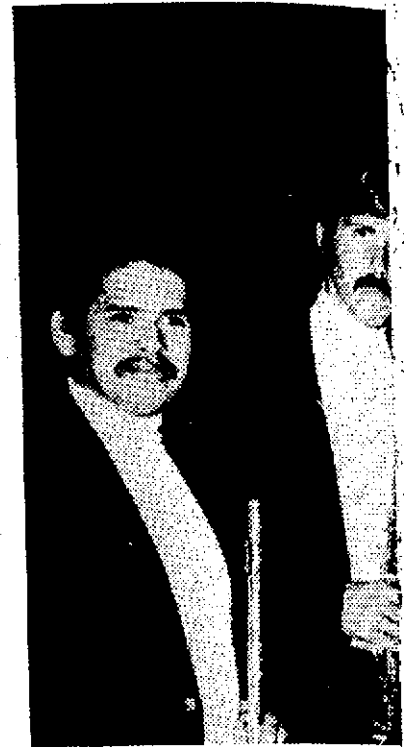
Ralph Campbell is in his old time lyrical vein with two landscape 'Elton Flat' and 'U.W.I. Campus' in oil on canvas. Gloria Escoffery and Karl Craig join him in celebrating the rustic virtues of the island, the one in a beautifully worked gouache on paper 'Browns Town Landscape', the other in acrylic on canvas 'Pink House'. Prudence Lovell offers precise watercolour illustrations of 'University Chapel' and 'Creative Arts Centre'.

Barrington Watson groups more of his beautiful women with their exquisite bone-structures in 'Conversion' (what shepherd ever had a congregation of Miss Worlds like these) and 'The Yoke', oils on canvas. Colin Garland unveils one of his incredibly skilled imaginary tableaux apparently on the subject of patient, long-suffering love: 'Comundrum', oil on canvas. Samere Tansley, standing up for her sex belligerently as ever, gives us three faces of Eve and an inference that woman births everything in this world, the world itself: 'The Creatrix', oil on apparently striped canvas.

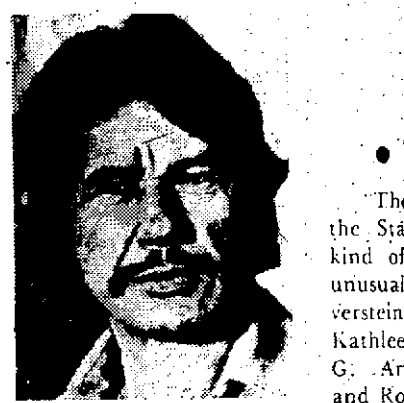
Richard 'Von' White introduces one of the few touches of humour in his delightful pair of wooden sculptures 'Artist and Model' which stands near Alexander Cooper's magisterial pair of untitled line-drawings recording passionate sex, satisfying even when a foot declines to sprout a great toe. Fabian Escoffery's 'Bishop's Candlestick', pen and ink on paper, shows keen appreciation of the values of tone. A similar appreciation in different technique comes from Patrick Stanigar working with pencil and charcoal on paper in 'Monkey Hill II' and 'Blue Mountain'.

For the ladies, Edna Manley emphasises the dramatic in 'The Creation' charcoal/chalk on hardboard; Petrona Morrison the domestic in her half-perceived 'The Family', pen and ink on paper; Janet Harold, somewhere between design and freedom, achieves an exquisite balance in her subtle 'Love Wadada', mixed media on paper, reminding us in these parlous times of the permanence of the heavens and the earth.

As usual, the Gallery has produced a good catalogue summarising the achievements of the exhibitors and illustrating all the works on display.



## 'THE CA



OPENING WEDNESDAY at the Carib and Harbour View Theatres is "The Mechanic". Charles Bronson (above) plays the part of the professional assassin.

**anansi AND UNSUNG HEROES OUTWEST**  
A Musical Drama by STAFFORD HARRISON  
Featuring: **ZAPPOW**  
Bob Andy • Winston McAnuff  
John Jones • Charmaine Hemmings  
Munair Zacca • Andrene Bonner  
Andrew Garbutt • Clive Anderson  
Directed by TREVOR NAIRNE  
**LAST SHOW**  
Sunday 5.00 p.m.  
Adm: \$2, \$3, \$4  
BOOKINGS: WARD THEATRE, THE MALL PHARMACY, THE MALL PLAZA  
WED. to SAT. 12 noon to 5 p.m.  
**WARD THEATRE**  
SPONSORED BY CIGARETTE CO. OF JAMAICA LTD.

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## An abundance of heroes

major stage appearance on Monday to a disappointingly small audience. Alternating in the title role of Anansi with entertainer/singer, John Jones (whose splendid performance I've commented on in an earlier review), Andy managed the difficult role surprisingly well, failing singularly, however, to convey the malevolence and cynicism of the character especially during those important opening scenes when not

actually speaking. Perhaps this was due to a conscious effort on Andy's part not to closely emulate those effective hand and finger movements used by Jones to simulate web-like, invisible designs around the unsuspecting individuals which greatly aided the illusion, or the speech pattern inherent in the lines.

Munair Zacca, a versatile

and experienced local theatre personality who has also appeared in a few films, gives a thoroughly professional show every time as the reactionary Supt. McKen, ready to side with the capitalists like his good friend, Paul Henry, against the new socialist policies of leader 'Joshie'. McKen's daughter Syblie, a precocious 'uptown' girl played quite well by Jennifer Chang, defies her authoritative, match-making father by consorting with orphan Jason, a naive urban migrant, into the ghetto's West who becomes a juvenile delinquent by circumstances outside of his control. Clive Anderson played this role well, although his timing could be improved upon, a significant weakness in many of our thespians today.

Newcomer Dahlia Lyons, an attractive young woman, subdues her youthful personality in portraying Jason's

sick mother, who's death starts Mada Wire (Adrene Bonner) on her search to find the God of the Web. Desmond Hall's Ras Punzel, one of the plays stronger characters, has improved over his disappointing first night's performance, although he still lacks much of the strength, dignity and experience of an elder dreadlocks who has been through several personality changes and survived the grim, earlier periods of persecution. Courtney McKenzie was a bright spark in his brief, but significant role as the crippled Sadrock. The costumes and set are beautifully done and the lighting is adequate. The dancers are attractive and pleasing, and the movement, generally, especially the use of the bodies to stimulate a spider's web, is well choreographed by Jackie Guy.

Like the Black and White

Immortals, the gangs cease hostilities and team up to fight McKen's special force, winning for themselves a temporary respite. The forces of the law, however, eventually overcome the ill-equipped gangs. Ras Punzel loses his 'locks' and the gangs are broken up, after being denounced by Igel when they all come seeking refuge in his mountain retreat. Jason escapes with globe-trotting George, the fairies depart for the frozen North, and Anansi is left to contemplate his precarious position.

In the programme's notes about the play, it says the drama is meant to show how the trickster personality in the Caribbean is changing to that of the hero. If this is the case, then we must have an abundance of heroes, both in the play and in the society it represents. I found only one hero in the play, Igel, the young Rastaman who alone resists the temptations of 'Babylon' to which the rest — even Ras Punzel — easily succumb. We need more heroes like Igel and less like Anansi.

### TODAY'S TELEVISION

- |                       |                                  |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| 3.00 This Is The Life | 7.00 Practice                    |
| 3.30 JAMAL            | 7.30 News/Weather and Commentary |
| 4.00 Sunday Matinee   | 8.00 Upstairs Downstairs         |
| 5.45 Filler           | 9.00 Sunday Night Movie          |
| 6.00 Headline News    | 10.30 Late Headline News         |
| 6.02 Here's Harry     | 10.32 Sign Off                   |
| 6.30 API              |                                  |

### RADIO HIGHLIGHTS

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|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>RADIO</b>                  | <b>RJR-AM</b>                             |
| JBC RADIO 2                   | 8.30 a.m. Church Bulletin/sunday Magazine |
| 8.15 a.m. Gospel sounds       | 1.15 p.m. Dynamic Sounds Serenade         |
| 3.00 a.m. Memories in music   | 6.45 p.m. Concert Favourites              |
| 7.00 p.m. Radio theatre       |   |
| <b>JBC RADIO 1</b>            | <b>RJR-FM</b>                             |
| 8.00 a.m. JBC News            | 9.00 a.m. BBC World News                  |
| 9.35 a.m. Death Announcements | 2.00 p.m. Ecstasy                         |
| 7.30 p.m. Command Performance | 5.00 p.m. FM Playhouse                    |

**TONIGHT**  
VISITING ACTORS FROM MARTINIQUE IN  
**L'ETAU**  
(THE VICE)  
at THE JAMAICA SCHOOL OF DRAMA  
CULTURAL TRAINING CENTRE 8.30 P.M.  
ADULTS \$3.00; STUDENTS WITH IDs \$1.00  
ALSO PLAYING OCT. 21, 22, 27, 28, 29  
JAMAICA SCIENTIFIC DISTRIBUTORS LTD.  
ADVANCE BOOKINGS AT LITTLE THEATRE

**MILL MOVIE**  
TODAY TIME 7.30 P.M.  
**'EIGHTY STEPS TO JONAH'** (Westline)  
Starring: Wayne Newton  
**DINNER**  
7 - 10 P.M.  
**FRIDAY & SATURDAY**  
**WEDNESDAY**  
**MOVIE & BARBECUE**  
PUB OPENS DAILY 4.30 P.M.  
HAPPY HOUR 6.30-7.30 P.M.  
WATCH OUT FOR THE FABULOUS FIVE!  
Entrance through Maner Park. Tel 41163  
**WHEELHOUSE**

**Wipe that smile from your face**  
WITH Carl Bradshaw  
written and produced by KATHY JOSEPHINE  
Adm \$5.00

**TONIGHT**  
**MAY PEN**  
7:00 P.M.  
ST. THOMAS MORE CHURCH HALL  
TICKETS: Vere Jaycees Members and at the door  
**NEXT WEEK-END**  
**MoBAY/FALMOUTH**  
SAT., OCT. 28 - MoBAY HIGH SCH. AUDITORIUM  
8:00 p.m. - Tickets - MoBay Jaycees members  
SUN., OCT. 29 - Trelawny Beach Hotel  
8:30 p.m. - Tickets at the Hotel