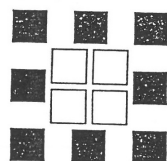


John Bellamy

Neil Dallas Brown

Bill Gillson

Alexander Moffat



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AN EXHIBITION

organised by Alan Bold

of work by

JOHN BELLANY

NEIL DALLAS BROWN

BILL GILLON

ALEXANDER MOFFAT

FRUIT MARKET GALLERY

Market Street, Edinburgh

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Bellany (top left) by **Anon**
Dallas Brown (top right) by **Neil Munro**
Gillon (below left) by **the Gillon children**
Moffat (below right) by **Lawrence Deighan**

INTRODUCTION

BY ALAN BOLD

IN this exhibition of work by John Bellany, Neil Dallas Brown, Bill Gillon and Alexander Moffat we see both the vitality of the figurative idiom and the enormous degree of individuality attainable within that idiom. Here are four painters using the same pictorial language in a completely personal way. They are together for this exhibition because they share certain assumptions about the nature of art as communication, but I have no desire to tie a collective critical label round their necks. The spectator will see at a glance that each painter stands on his own artistic feet, that none has any need of an *ism* to cling onto. However, by choosing the figurative path they have all taken as their priority that alliance between technical skill and imaginative insight that is the enduring achievement of Western visual art.

By figurative work I mean painting that refuses to lose sight of the external world that confronts our eyes. The figurative artist is able to conduct a visual dialogue with the spectator by pictorially manipulating recognisable phenomena: people, landscapes, animals, &c. His visual language is based on images from the external world because he believes the human figure in an environment to be the most potent visual metaphor available to the painter. Human features have an *emotional* impact. Mystical artists like Mondrian and Kandinsky tried to develop an art uncontaminated by figuration, but by substituting decorative abstraction for the presence of humanity they reached a dead end. It seems, as E. H. Gombrich put it in a 1956 essay on 'The Vogue of Abstract Art' that visual art needs to acknowledge the objective world in order to develop its richest statements, that "what subject-matter imparts to painting is not so much an 'extraneous interest' as another dimension for the development of relationships".

Figurative art does not consist, however, in slavish fidelity to nature but in a formal interpretation of nature. Nor does it proceed from a desire to paint a pretty picture: look at the exposed nervous system of a Bellany painting; the sense of quiet menace in a Dallas Brown; the nightmare quality of a Gillon; the presence of human grief in Moffat's work. Basically figurative art is a means of visual communication that demands both skill and imagination. The ability to reproduce the external world is a craft; the capacity to imaginatively transform the external world into a personal vision is art. Philosophers since Kant have been concerned at how much of himself the individual brings to his perception of the world: painters offer one solution to this problem in a vividly colourful way. The world that Bellany, Dallas Brown, Gillon and Moffat live in is one thing: yet they each have a unique way of looking at it. And it is by studying the past that they have developed original styles.

It was during the Renaissance that artists first perfected a pictorial language capable of profound visionary statement. By developing the science of perspective, the craft of modelling, and the art of illusionist space the Renaissance artists achieved a pictorial equivalent of the prevailing humanism. They emphasised the beauty and grace and potential of mankind and by their own astonishing skills were living proof of what creativity man was capable of. All their triumphs were based on an impeccable technique acquired through a sound apprenticeship. The poet Ezra Pound once said that "technique is the test of sincerity": the Renaissance artists passed that test with flying colours.

However by the 19th century artists no longer had a monopoly of creativity. Industrial revolution had made artists apparently redundant and the

machine was elevated to a fetishistic status. Increasingly science captured the human imagination and the questioning spirit of the Renaissance degenerated into academic mannerism. Scientists seemed set to remake the world in their own image and a new machine, the camera, was there to record their progress. Photography had a traumatic shock-effect on artists who relied solely on academic representation so the most thoughtful artists felt they should emulate the apparent objectivity and cerebration of men of science. As Herbert Read showed in his 1949 essay 'The Modern Epoch in Art' painters became obsessed with the idea of science. Thus Constable could say, in 1836, that "Painting is a science, and should be pursued as an enquiry into the laws of nature" and "pictures are but experiments". Cézanne, in 1906, spoke of "going on with my researches".

Cézanne is undoubtedly the seminal figure in modern art which is ironically apt as many of his theories were based, I believe, on a rationalisation of his limitations as a draughtsman. In 1907—the crucial year in the development of modern art—three things happened: the Cézanne Memorial Exhibition was mounted at the Salon d'Automne; there was the publication of Cézanne's letter of 15 April 1904 to Emile Bernard in which the painter said that "Nature should be treated in terms of the cylinder, the sphere, the cone, and all laid out in perspective, i.e. so that each side of an object or a plane converges on a single point"; and in Montmartre, Picasso was completing "Les Femmes d'Alger". What motivated Picasso and the other Cubists was a genuine spirit of experimental research but what they succeeded in doing was to reduce a painting to the sum of its two dimensions. They threw out the creative baby with the academic bathwater. This was to take painting back to a pre-Renaissance state of non-illusionist, non-figurative primitivism and because Cubism was different, was novel, it was held to be progressive. Henceforth all regressive tendencies were dignified by the contradictory epithet "progressive".

The Cubists also set a precedent that was to prove irresistible to artists deprived of a social function and inclined, by temperament, to revolutionary postures: the idea of the "school" of painting complete with manifesto and atmosphere of exclusivity. The Renaissance ideal of the artistic individual was abandoned. Instead there was Futurism (announced by Marinetti in 1909), Suprematism (announced by Malevich in 1916), Dadaism (announced by Tristan Tzara in 1918), Constructivism (announced by Pevsner and Gabo in 1920), Surrealism (announced by André Breton in 1924). Of all these movements it was Dadaism that had the most permanent effect on modern art. Tzara claimed that the policy of Dadaism was "to establish the idiotic everywhere" and that sums up the direction of much of the art that followed the Great War.

After that war art was in a chaotic state on two counts: the atrophy of skill, and the triumph of a new critical orthodoxy. First, technical ability seemed out of place in a destructively ugly world, so what did it matter if one could paint or not? Contemporary civilisation was seemingly committing suicide and its artefacts hardly justified the death of so many. Ezra Pound, whose friend the sculptor Gaudier-Brzeska died in that war, summed up the feeling:

There died a myriad,
And of the best, among them,
For an old bitch gone in the teeth,
For a botched civilization.

However the atrophy of artistic skill was to have lamentable consequences. The anti-traditional tidal wave had swept away technical expertise and artists were left at the mercy of their incompetence. Young painters could go through art college without acquiring the fundamentals of a visual language and a whole generation of artists became visually illiterate. And because they were visually illiterate they welcomed the new critical orthodoxy.

Fashionable critics maintained that any assault on the tradition of art was, *ipso facto*, "advanced", "progressive", "experimental". They reasoned

that because science—synonymous with progress—was incomprehensible to the masses then it followed that incomprehensible art was progressive art. The analogy with science was fallacious for science proceeds by an accumulation of traditional knowledge and a constant refinement of technique. When the great scientist makes his imaginative leap he does so from a solid basis of research and technique. The visually illiterate modern painter leaps from a vacuum into a void. However the critics have continued to call regressive art "progressive" and have loudly applauded each new venture into the absurd: those quickly-dated novelties like Pop, Minimal, Destructive art. The spurious cult of novelty has left us without the means to make a coherent vision of our scientific age.

The beginning of a solution is to re-establish the figurative language and this is what artists like Bellamy, Dallas Brown, Gillon and Moffat are doing. Figurative painting recognises that, in the interests of artistic integrity, a work must succeed at a craft level before it can be considered as art. In an era when the dominant critical dogma has been virulently anti-traditional the figurative stance of these four is a credential in itself. For the work that is most remunerative, that is most likely to receive critical approbation, is anti-traditional. The figurative artist is likely to be ridiculed as reactionary, a victim of neophobia. However we should note that the cultists of novelty cannot even provide—to borrow the title of a book by Ian Dunlop—"the shock of the new". They merely nauseate as they have one eye on the market and one eye on the latest fashion. The rapid eye movement that results gives them no opportunity to focus on the timeless qualities of art.

It is surprising that four such fine figurative painters as Bellamy, Dallas Brown, Gillon and Moffat should come out of Scotland for Scotland has been weak on painting since, as a nation, she missed out on the Renaissance. While visions of an optimistic humanism were being created all over Europe, Scotland closed her eyes to the visual aspects of the world. The Scottish Reformers

established a taboo against visual images on the grounds that they were idolatrous. The 6th century Pope, Gregory the Great, said that "painting can do for the illiterate what writing does for those who can read". Scotland's 16th century anti-Pope, Knox, was determined to eradicate illiteracy so the population could base their lives on the letter of biblical law. This led to an almost exclusively word-based culture. To be a Scottish artist it was obligatory to use the written word. The stature of men like Hume, Burns, Scott, Stevenson, MacDiarmid, Muir proves that Scotland has never lacked men of genius. The difficulty for a visually-orientated artist was where to start.

When the Scottish court moved to London in 1603 there was an economic hole in Scotland's heart and without financial backing artists starved—a far from romantic predicament. A potentially outstanding artist like George Jamesone, the "Scottish Vandyck", had to rely on the precarious patronage of the likes of the Provost of Aberdeen. Raeburn and Wilkie imported a style and displayed native talent and then, with the appointment of Robert Scott Lauder as Master of the Trustees' Academy in 1852, an indigenous Scottish style began to emerge. Alas it consisted in the desire to paint a pretty picture and leave it at that. Lauder's students, Orchardson, McTaggart and Pettie emphasised colour and submitted themselves to visual sensation. But they lacked formal control and were unable to make artistically autonomous statements out of their relationship with nature. After McTaggart, Scottish painting splintered into schools of colourists: the Scottish Colourists of the 1920s, the J. D. Fergusson-inspired New Scottish Group of the 1940s, and others. And the four Scottish art colleges passed into the delicate hands of painters committed to picturesque colour.

No, the way to a figurative revival was not to be found in the Scottish backyard. What Bellamy, Dallas Brown, Gillon and Moffat have done is to import the central European tradition of figurative painting. They have learned an international figurative language. It would be too much to expect a second Renaissance at this stage but these

four painters have made a fine start. They put their faith in communication and because of this I think they hold the key to Scotland's artistic future. For their nationality, while never asserted, is an inescapable part of their lives.

John Bellany was born in Port Seton in 1942, the son of a boatbuilder. As a boy he lived and worked among the fishermen and watched the intimate relationship these men had with the sea that provided for them yet threatened them. Fishing is a hard, rugged industry and a total way of life, so it was natural that Bellany should paint boats and fishermen and a communal way of living. When Bellany came to Edinburgh art college to study painting he brought with him a massive self-confidence in his artistic ability and a fisherman's mentality. He was not one to talk pretentiously about art—"yap" is the way he puts it. No, he would outpaint everyone around. He has never lost this desire to produce a gigantic haul of paintings every year and is certainly the most prolific painter I have ever met.

College for Bellany was not somewhere to serve time before a teaching career. It was a place for passionate discussions on art, for confrontations with students and staff. Because Bellany thought of painting as the most important thing in life that made him stick out like a sore thumb. In Edinburgh he formed a close friendship with Alexander Moffat and the two painters teamed up as a formidable pair—taking their arguments into the pubs and their paintings into the streets. They believed that art mattered, that it should come out into the open. During successive Edinburgh festivals the two painters hung their work on the railings facing the temple of the Scottish art establishment: the Royal Scottish Academy.

With Moffat, Bellany built a pantheon of modern European figurative masters: Léger, Beckmann, Munch, Ensor, Nolde, Soutine, Bacon. Bellany also felt an affinity with the great masters of northern Europe, especially Rembrandt and Brueghel. He liked the earthly realism of their approach, their determination to show life in all

its aspects, their refusal to prettify the world. In 1965 Bellany travelled through Holland and Belgium and came back a better painter for the experience. He was no longer so optimistic about the world, no longer so self-centred. From 1965-8 he studied at the Royal College of Art and worked on his drawing and his powers of expression. The painter who now influenced Bellany most was Goya whose meditations on the disasters of war made Bellany think like a political animal. Not in any party-political sense, but with a large compassion for the sufferings of mankind.

At first Bellany naturally concentrated on subjects relating to the fishing industry. Now he began to work out a style of painting that would show the vulnerability of the human species. He would show man as a potentially great creature who too easily descends into barbarism. Bellany painted figures from concentration camps (he visited Buchenwald with Alexander Moffat and myself in 1967) and victims of the war in Vietnam. To emphasise his theme of the vulnerability of the individual he arranged his figures frontally so they would confront the spectator. His paintings are meant to make the spectator revise his attitude to life. For all the pictorial skills Bellany has at his fingertips his paintings are—deliberately—raw emotional statements and not reassuring works of escapist art.

Recently his paintings have referred more to an inner world of torment and the figuration is less topical. The lighting is extreme, like a brilliant spotlight, so the figures have nowhere to hide. Everything is direct, accusing, emotionally extreme. Figures from nightmare continually impinge on figures with a real identity. Thus in many of the pictures the features of the artist are unmistakably there while around him hover shapes from a conscience at war with a world ruled by irrational rituals.

Introducing an exhibition of Bellany's in 1971 I said: "we can but conclude that Bellany is a *natural*. He is one of those rare people who spontaneously process experience into visual terms".

I feel this even more strongly now. His work has outstripped his influences—they have been completely absorbed—and he is creating a personal iconography. He favours the triptych format and usually presents a central episode of metamorphosis (man into bird, women into fish, &c.) in the setting of a seascape. The vulnerable figures are still there but they have assumed a totemic significance in the centre of the painting. The side panels (recently Bellany has divided a single surface up into three instead of actually painting three separate areas) usually take elements from the central metamorphosis and translate them into the realms of nightmare.

Bellany is a superb colourist, a man who is adept at using bright colours to create an emotional impact. I had a recent experience of this and I think it will be shared by visitors to the exhibition as they go from painter to painter. On a recent trip to see Dallas Brown in Newport-on-Tay I went straight to the painter's studio and became absorbed in the world the pictures suggested. Dallas Brown is a quiet, unassuming man, socially the antithesis of Bellany with all his frenetic exuberance and panache. Dallas Brown's home is a safe distance from Dundee and I'm sure he feels the pressures of modern industrial life intensely. In London (where he lives and teaches at Croydon art college and the Royal College of Art) Bellany lives at a fantastic pace, burning the candle left, right and centre. All this seemed miles away from the coastal quiet of Newport-on-Tay.

When Dallas Brown and I had finished talking for the morning he said, on the way downstairs, that he had a Bellany he wanted to show me. My eyes had become accustomed to the monochromatic subtlety of Dallas Brown's work and when he opened the door to show me his Bellany the colours seemed to jump out, the painting seemed to shout out for attention. This reminded me forcefully that the painters in this show could never be subsumed under the one critical umbrella and that each deserves individual scrutiny. For I am implying no value judgment in the contrast between Bellany

and Dallas Brown. For those unused to aggressive emotional confrontation Dallas Brown's work may seem more acceptable.

An Insurance Manager's son, Neil Dallas Brown was born in Elgin in 1938. He studied painting in Dundee and, after a postgraduate year, attended the British school in Rome (where he paid close attention to the work of Caravaggio) and the Royal Academy Schools, London. After visits to Europe and America on prizes and scholarships he did various jobs (farmhand, barman, &c.) so he could concentrate on painting. He told me that figurative painting for him was no ideological crusade—he has always been driven by a craftsman's pride in his work. In 1968 he became a lecturer at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and he lives in his large house in Newport-on-Tay where serenity allows him to recollect his emotions in tranquillity. He is definitely a man who is glad to be shot of urban life as often as possible.

Dallas Brown is essentially a private painter offering the public glimpses of his interior mind because he chooses to communicate with a coherent imagery. Moreover he is a thematic painter in the sense that his paintings begin with a programme which is then carried through with great assurance. He is always in control of his medium, never possessed by it. Because of this he is perfectly capable of explaining his aims verbally. On the role of animals and birds in his paintings, for example, he says: "They can act as a presiding spirit, a guardian, a symbol of evil or a threatening deity. I am frequently concerned with producing visual statements which attempt to express the disquieting utterances of the animal kingdom in certain situations. Utterances which reveal their superior knowledge as if they were the vehicle for the transmission of some greater power".

This thematic approach gives Dallas Brown's paintings the appearance of works conceived mentally and then expertly executed. There is thus a "cool" approach to the treatment of each theme, an unsensuous use of paint itself. Dallas Brown is concerned with transcribing his ideas into

pictorially satisfying objects. And as if to emphasise the intellectual origins of his paintings he has dispensed with the emotional possibilities of colour and concentrated on tonality. I have the feeling that Dallas Brown wants his paintings to seep secretly into the sub-consciousness of the spectator, to make their presence felt in a clandestine manner.

We may doubt the anthropological propriety of Dallas Brown attributing "superior knowledge" to animals but that is how he sees them and that is how he paints them. It is an approach shared by the poet Ted Hughes who praises animals because they act instinctively not reflectively, they have

No indolent procrastinations and no yawning stares.

No sighs or head-scratchings.

Dallas Brown's preference for animal instinct is paradoxical in a man who likes to live such an ordered life. But perhaps it is precisely because he is such a good family man, such a quiet chap, that he is hypersensitive to the presence of animals. In one of his paintings of a trapped bird a naked woman sleeps peacefully on a chair. Above her a bird flutters frantically, terrified at being trapped in the domestic cage that man has constructed for his mate. Another painting, of a nude and a cat, shows another naked female turning her back on the spectator while the cat seems aware of something disturbing. This approach to painting implies the existence of psychic forces and Dallas Brown clearly tries to exorcise these in his paintings. He has admitted as much by saying: "If I reveal the dark recesses of my mind then the transference of them onto canvas has a strong therapeutic value". It also gives the spectator an astonishingly clear insight into the mind of a hypersensitive man.

For a man who describes himself as a romantic realist Dallas Brown rather surprisingly names Caravaggio as his master—"his very positive use of chiaroscuro left a deep impression". The impact Caravaggio had on his contemporaries was anything but romantic. The disturbing compositional contortions, the refusal to dress up people in angelic clothes, the emphasis on dark areas of

life—these were hardly *romantic*. What Dallas Brown has learned from Caravaggio, though, is a desire to involve the subconscious in his pictures, a compulsion to convey mood: he isolates one incident and shows pressure on the solitary figure. Despite the Freudian overtones Dallas Brown makes sure his paintings are informed with a superb aesthetic balance. His is an art that excludes the irrelevant, that selects only those elements that are capable of conveying a quiet menace.

He almost always uses the domestic setting, the interior of a modern affluent house, but avoids a precise location and eschews the illusion of deep space in his pictures. So, for that matter, do Bellamy and Moffat. These three seem to feel that at this stage of the revival of the figurative language it is more meaningful to take a schematic approach than to step too far back into the history of painting. They follow what Max Beckmann said in 1948: "We must observe what may be called the Law of Surface, and this law must never be broken by using the false technique of illusion". One man who takes a pride in breaking that arbitrary law is Bill Gillon the most striking feature of whose work is the exploitation of illusionist space.

Gillon comes from Leith—he was born there in 1942, the son of a labourer. He studied at Edinburgh art college and, not gregarious by nature, concentrated on perfecting his pictorial technique. He has always wanted, I think, to be a more skillful painter than anyone else and he takes tremendous pains over his work. Each picture is planned in great detail and the degree of sheer professional finish he brings to the final work is salutary in the era of the slap-and-dribble artist. Gillon loves to produce the illusion of great distance in his pictures so that the spectator is taken out of the everyday world and into the marvellous world of sheer invention that Gillon creates. He is a master of the *trompe l'oeil* effect. Yet this delight in his craft is no mere display of virtuosity. There is an allegorical depth to Gillon's work.

He prefers to work on a big scale—often on shaped surfaces—so he can make large pictorial statements. To do this he has taken up a dialectical

approach to his subject-matter by creating an art of contrasts. There is contrast between modern reality and the dreams of classical painting; between people and machines; between soft curvaceous shapes and the hard edges of machinery. He is especially fond of using figures that conform to the conventions of Flemish painting (e.g. the pear-shaped woman) and placing them beside modern artefacts. And to emphasise his use of contrasts his chromatic world is basically a black and white one. *Basically*: he does not preclude the use of colour to set the timelessness of man's creativity against the destructive objects men have made.

One of the biggest influences on Gillon's work has been Flemish painting and many of his figures recall the panels of Adam and Eve from Van Eyck's great polyptych "The Ghent Altarpiece". (He has also been influenced by the whole idea of the multi-faceted painting surface favoured by Flemish painters). Now Gillon takes these figures—naked but not erotically so—and encloses them in compositional conventions. Or he places them on meticulously patterned geometric plinths. The dichotomy he wishes to establish is between the volition of man and the mindlessness of the machine. Once man was in control of the world, but Gillon seems to feel that machines may be taking over. Man is endlessly inventive—Gillon's work is self-evidence of that—but his inventive faculty is capable of a creative or destructive direction. An acute observer of modern life, Gillon sees man threatened by machines that bristle with murderous power.

Gillon certainly has no desire to dish up pleasant visual platitudes and, as one of his favourite modern painters is Magritte, it is worth recalling that the Belgian said his basic attitude to painting was polemical: "My interest lay entirely in provoking an emotional shock". I know many people have been shocked by the frankness of Gillon's approach to his uncompromising subject-matter. They find it distressing because he stresses the mortality of his figures by indicating their skeletal structure. He sees the bones beneath the flesh and it is clear that the compartments in which Gillon's figures stand remind the spectator that the last

resting place is the coffin. What T. S. Eliot said of Donne applies equally to the vision of Bill Gillon:

He knew the anguish of the marrow
The age of the skeleton;
No contact possible to flesh
Allayed the fever of the bone.

But while recognising death, Gillon also shows that man can become immortal by creating. Such is the strength of his painting.

Gillon's world is dark—funereal—and he avoids a wide chromatic range. His anatomical figures in the coffin-like compartments may seem too morbid for some, but I think there is a Yeatsian "terrible beauty" in the imagery that Gillon uses. It does not avoid reality but transforms it into a vision. Many of his paintings use doors as a recurring motif and invite the spectator to imagine what lies behind them: a naked woman, a dream landscape, or a projection of the spectator's fears. They are visually stimulating in an extremely tantalising way. The same is true of his perceptive use of perspective to suggest infinite vistas of imagination. Gillon has had, inexplicably, little recognition of his talent but this has done nothing to deter him from painting. He works as a part-time teacher in an Edinburgh technical college and devotes all his spare time to his work. Quiet and thoughtful by nature, what he has of importance to say goes into his work. I think it is of crucial importance.

Like Bill Gillon, Alexander Moffat has chosen to work in Edinburgh rather than chase the brighter gallery-lights of London. It is difficult to sell pictures in Scotland and for the figurative painter of insight almost impossible. Yet Moffat has chosen to take his stand as a full-time painter. Private buyers are usually followers of fashion, which means they subscribe to the cult of novelty—something Moffat has tried to change by involving himself in the art world in an administrative way. He is chairman of Edinburgh's New 57 Gallery. He is not, though, originally an Edinburgh man. He was born in Dunfermline in 1943 and came to Edin-

burgh after the death of his father—a schoolteacher—to study at the art college. There, as I have said, he and John Bellany formed an inseparable duo. Having no desire to lapse into careerism Moffat decided to avoid what he feels to be pitfalls tempting the painter: he has never taken a job involving the teaching of art. He has preserved his independence.

Moffat has always acted with a total sense of commitment. So when he came under the influence of Fernand Léger he went the whole way, socialism and all. I went with Moffat to visit the Léger Museum in Biot and he revelled in the atmosphere, wondering if someday something similar might be achieved in Scotland. An infectious enthusiast for art, Moffat learned from Léger to define man sharply in a joyously colourful landscape. Compositionally the human figure became all-important in his work. It was a period of intense optimism for Moffat. He took his socialism seriously enough to work in an engineering factory so his paintings of working men would be rooted in an authentic reality, would not be Scottish versions of stalinist realism.

After his study of Léger, Moffat began to look closely at the work of Max Beckmann. Moffat is a precise person with a passion for order and Beckmann's emphasis on formal structure gave him the impetus he needed. Moffat worked in a style that was hard, harsh, masculine. Its strongest feature was a muscular black line that sharply contained each figure and facet of the composition and set up a strong surface rhythm. It was a confident style that allowed Moffat to bring the same expressionistic zest to portraits and compositions alike. His portraits have been of the Scottish artistic community—a reflexion of Moffat's belief in the interdependence of the arts—and he is light years away from those who make their living out of photographic likenesses of beaming businessmen. Due recognition for his achievement in this field came when the Scottish National Portrait Gallery mounted a prestigious exhibition of his work during the Edinburgh festival of 1973.

Up to this point the presence of many human figures was the trademark of Moffat's style. His pictures were packed with all types of people—they deliberately went out to embrace humanity. Then in 1973 came a shattering personal blow: the tragic death of the artist's elder brother John. John was one of those individuals capable of excelling in any intellectual field, a genuine scholar and gentleman. He chose the legal profession but was also a fine pianist, a superb linguist, a man with a philosophical mind. He, more than anyone else, encouraged Moffat to stick to the path he had chosen. With John's death a light went out of Moffat's life and in the pictures he exhibits here the human figure is often absent except by implication. There is a feeling of waiting for someone to appear now that Moffat has moved from a social to a psychological approach. Now his obsessive image is of a streetlamp embraced by two crescent moons. Neither the artificial light of the lamp nor the reflected light of the moon can banish the midnight darkness of the city brushed by death. These paintings, with their Munch-like luminosity and ominous swirling skies, are haunted.

There is no doubt that these recent monothematic pictures of Moffat's form part of a deeply felt memorial sequence. Such a dramatic change of style suggests the emotional fragility of Moffat's new pictorial outlook. His socially orientated work was compositionally pre-conceived and calculated. Now there is more intuition in evidence. Finding the Beckmann-inspired linear idiom too precisely definite, too unsubtle to communicate solitary despair, Moffat has evolved this symbolic way of seeing things too personal to talk of. His colour—once breezily bright—has become richer and his imagery more enigmatic. Yet he has not retreated from the real world, the reference to externals is still there. It is a fascinating confirmation of the flexibility of the figurative idiom.

Moffat, Gillon, Dallas Brown, Bellany: four painters and four ways of looking at the world. The vitality of their work shows that at last there is a valid Scottish tradition in painting. I have

spent some time trying to indicate the context of their painting, their individual approach to figuration, but in the end the paintings speak for themselves. What they have to say is not always pleasant—no matter. It is up to you, the spectator, to notice what they are saying for they look to the future while recognising the past in a resounding present tense.

Armin Boren

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A.B.

PLATE 1
John Bellany : *The Sea People* 1974
Oil on canvas 183 x 259.

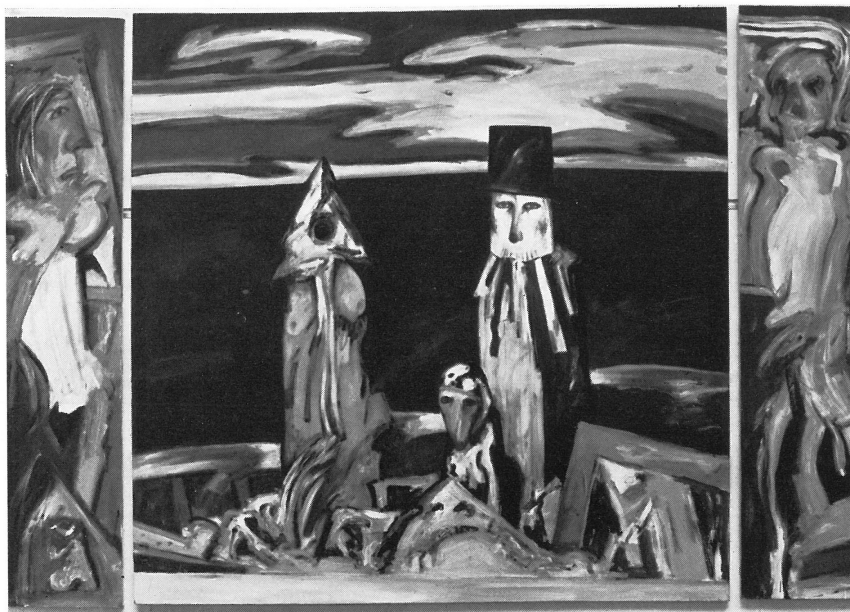


PLATE 2
John Bellany : *Self Portrait with Owl Mask* 1974
Oil on canvas 183 x 173.



PLATE 3
Neil Dallas Brown : **Nude** 1972
Oil on board 122 x 122 (cat no 3).

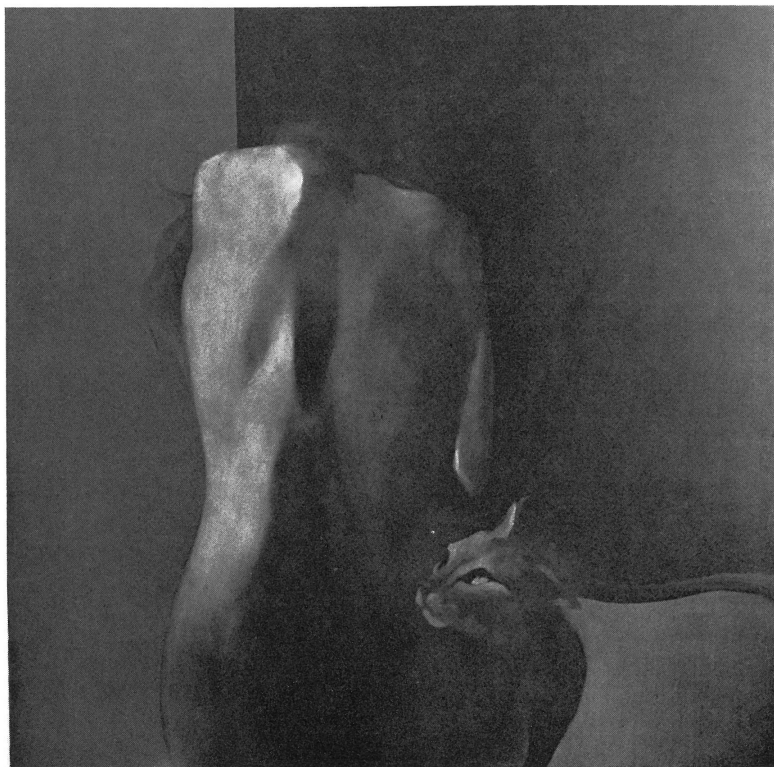


PLATE 4
Neil Dallas Brown : **The Room** 1975
Pencil and gouache 26.5 x 25.5 (cat no 12).

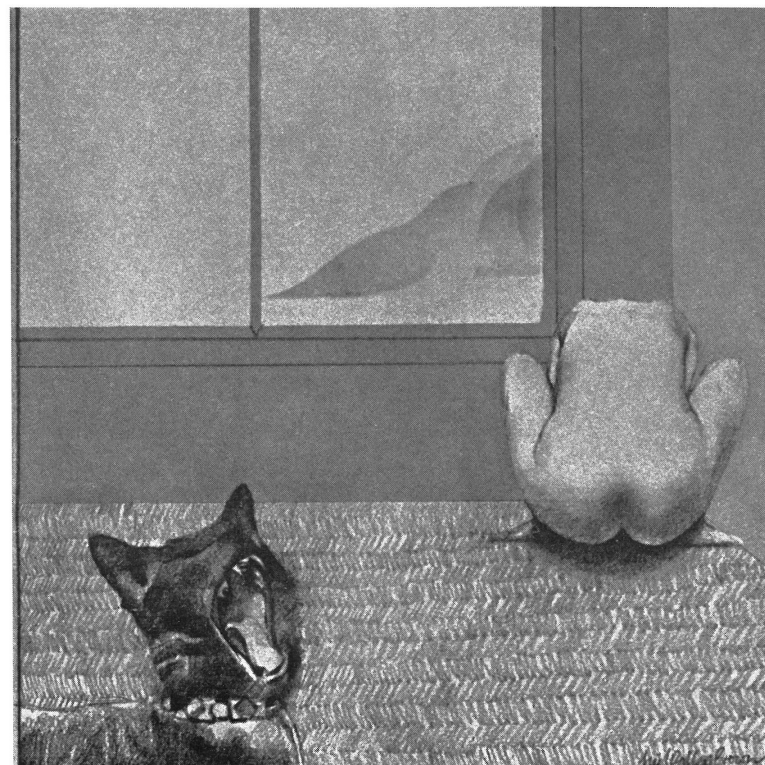


PLATE 5
 Bill Gillon : **And a Fair Haired Girl** 1974
 Oil on wood 200 x 130 (cat no 22).



PLATE 6
 Bill Gillon : **Whispering Night** 1974
 Oil on wood 198 x 130 (cat no 23).

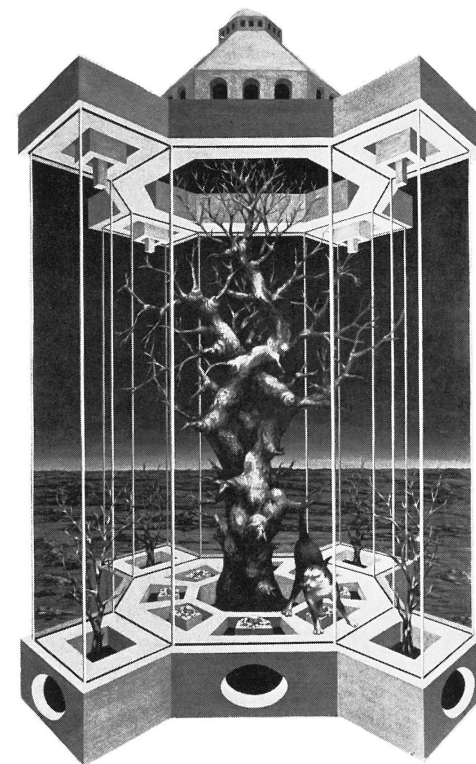


PLATE 7
Alexander Moffat : **Midnight** 1973
Oil on canvas 183 x 162.5 (cat no 34).



PLATE 8
Alexander Moffat : **Summer Evening** 1974
Oil on canvas 107 x 152.5 (cat no 37).



CATALOGUE

Measurements are given in centimetres, height precedes width.

A price list is available on request at the desk.

JOHN BELLANY

John Bellany's selection comprises an un-numbered, untitled sequence.

NEIL DALLAS BROWN

- 1 **Figure and Birds in a Landscape** 1971. Oil on canvas 127 x 178.
- 2 **Woman and Cats** 1971. Oil on canvas 178 x 178.
- 3 **Nude** 1972. Oil on board 122 x 122.
- 4 **Girl on a Bed** 1972. Oil and plastic emulsion on board 198 x 160.
- 5 **Lovers on the Edge of a Wood** 1973. Oil on canvas 142 x 142.
- 6 **Bather and Black Dog** 1973. Oil on canvas 122 x 122.
- 7 **Meadow** 1974. Oil on canvas 122 x 122.
- 8 **Figure and Bird in a Copse** 1974. Oil on canvas 127 x 127.
- 9 **Act, Death Dream** 1974. Oil on board 160 x 129.5.
- 10 **Crouching Figure, Swimming Pool** 1975. Oil on board 160 x 134.5.
- 11 **The Possessed** 1975. Oil on canvas 162.5 x 193.
- 12 **The Room** 1975. Pencil and gouache 26.5 x 25.5.
- 13 **Crouching Nude and Black Dog, Interior** 1974. Pencil and gouache 35.5 x 26.5.
- 14 **Lying Nude and Parrot** 1975. Pencil and gouache 34 x 29.

BILL GILLON

- 15 **Octagonal Space** 1974. Oil on wood 194 x 186.
- 16 **Specimen** 1973. Oil on wood 236 x 209.
- 17 **The Wave** 1975. Oil on wood 180 x 122.
- 18 **Saturn's Tree** 1975. Oil on wood 192 x 133.
- 19 **Dark Haired Girl** 1975. Oil on wood 197 x 122.

- 20 **Through a Door** 1975. Oil on wood 193 x 94.
- 21 **Eclipse** 1974. Oil on wood 200 x 155.
- 22 **And a Fair Haired Girl** 1974. Oil on wood 200 x 130.
- 23 **Whispering Night** 1974. Oil on wood 198 x 130.
- 24 **Dog and Circle** 1975. Ink 56 x 49.
- 25 **Wave** 1975. Graphite 48 x 50.
- 26 **Saturn's Tree** 1974. Ink 41 x 29.
- 27 **Nude and Dog** 1974. Graphite 63 x 49.5.
- 28 **Bird in Stair** 1974. Graphite and ink 50.5 x 41.
- 29 **Head with Foetus** 1973. Graphite 49 x 42.
- 30 **Girl with Lizard** 1973. Ink 65 x 53.
- 31 **Bird Girl** 1974. Ink 56.5 x 43.5.
- 32 **Bird and Nude** 1974. Ink 48.5 x 45.
- 33 **Nude** 1974. Pastel 65.5 x 47.5.

ALEXANDER MOFFAT

- 34 **Midnight** 1973. Oil on canvas 183 x 162.5.
- 35 **Starry Night** 1973. Oil on canvas 99 x 122.
- 36 **Tree in the Night** 1974. Oil on canvas 122 x 152.5.
- 37 **Summer Evening** 1974. Oil on canvas 107 x 152.5.
- 38 **Summer Evening** 1974. Oil on canvas 107 x 114.
- 39 **The Street—Evening** 1974. Oil on canvas 152.5 x 91.5.
- 40 **The Street—Night** 1974. Acrylic on canvas 152.5 x 91.5.
- 41 **Night over the Street** 1975. Acrylic on canvas 159 x 77.5.
- 42 **The Lane at Night** 1974. Oil on canvas 132 x 91.5.
- 43 **The Lamp** 1975. Acrylic on canvas 96.5 x 152.5.
- 44 **The Street at Night** 1975. Pastel 79 x 57.
- 45 **The Street to the Sea** 1975. Pastel 79 x 57.
- 46 **Lamp at Night** 1975. Pastel 56 x 76.
- 47 **The Lamp** 1975. Pastel 56 x 76.
- 48 **Tree in the Night** 1975. Pastel 56 x 76.
- 49 **Evening** 1975. Pastel 57 x 76.
- 50 **In the Lane** 1975. Charcoal 58.5 x 39.5.
- 51 **The Street** 1975. Charcoal 58.5 x 42.
- 52 **The Lamp** 1975. Charcoal 42 x 58.5.
- 53 **The Lighthouse** 1975. Charcoal 42 x 58.5.

