

ABSTRACT ROUND-UP

One-Man Shows and Big Group Exhibition Reveal Strengths and Weaknesses

By HOWARD DEVREE

MOST of the various facets of abstraction may be seen in recently opened exhibitions, from work with clearly recognized forms and concentration on the essence of objects, through use of linear and plane organizations, to the current nonobjective or nonfigurative painting.

If one wishes to obtain a perspective over this wide range one may well begin with the recent paintings by Carlyle Brown at the Catherine Viviano Gallery. Brown, although he devotes himself to tables with still-life as his theme, manages to combine something reminiscent of the Renaissance with something cubist. In whites, tans and dull blues he builds up architectural organizations of fruit, glasses, egg cups, wicker-bound flask, knives and pitchers into receding planes stressed in light and with balance of forms; and he makes his backgrounds suggest landscape or architecture in a remote reminiscence of Mantegna and other Renaissance masters. Brown attains an extra dimension through his cubist-abstract approach and achieves quite remarkable decorative effects.

Of France and Italy

Moving on to the late paintings by Cleve Gray at the Jacques Seligmann Gallery one finds the artist extending the style he has evolved, based somewhat on the manner of Jacques Villon to whom he pays tribute in the portrait reproduced below. Gray's color is personal and fairly high—this portrait is in reds, tans and yellows and one of Brancusi in his studio is in lime greens and blues—into purple. His palette assists him in his homage to Italy when orange-yellows, a chord of blues and greens, and touches of mauve and

having seen the artist's lips move soundlessly. Here are canvases of an almost pure slaty tone with so little variation in their surfaces that one must look hard to be sure that any unevenness is not merely from the gallery lighting. The true mystic is in an unassailable position: if he says he knows something by an inner source, how disprove it? The non-mystic can only confess inability to satisfy himself that this is more than an unexpressed soliloquy.

This sense of the intensely personal may well be felt in a number of examples in the largest show of the week, a group exhibition at the Stable Gallery which includes work by a large number of painters who have come to be roughly identified and grouped as the so-called advance guard. To temper this feeling, however, one is greeted at the entrance by a particularly explosive Hofmann in green, red, blue and a swirl of minor assorted colors, and as one progresses through two floors of pictures one becomes easily convinced that Hofmann's disciples are numerous.

It is of decided interest that a number of the outstanding artists are no longer satisfied with making use of picture elements as such, and that there seems to be an increasing tendency toward the figurative, toward more palpable suggestion than has been true in much of the work. De Kooning's picture is clearly figurative and Russell's big nude embodies without doubt much that he has learned from his nonobjective painting. If we are over the divide on the confusion of means with ends there is indeed occasion for celebration.

Figuration

In still other work, although fig-

CONTEMPORARY WITH STRESS ON FORM



"Round Table with Fiasco and Landscape," by Carlyle Brown, at the Viviano Gallery.

RECALLING ENGLISH ROMANTICISM

By ALINE B. LOUCHHEIM

ROMANTICISM is a poetic projection of dreams and longings into worlds remote in time and space, into settings exotic and strange. It is concerned with dreams and longings that must remain forever ungratified and unfulfilled. Its temper is melancholy; its ultimate preoccupation, death.

The romanticism of eighteenth-century England speaks in somewhat dulcet tones. It seems as much linked to the French rococo at one end as to the wilder, more turbulent and agonized outpourings of the Wordsworth-Byron-Scott

Eighteenth Century Work In Exhibition Depicts Nature and Fantasy

Alpdruck or, literally, "Elf-press.") There are even intimations of death in Reynolds' pearly "Cupid." For the little god is here a link-boy, he who carried torches to light lovers' homeward way—and his wings have become those of bats! And Dürer's "Melancholia" becomes a wild-eyed, satanic figure in Fuseli's "Here I and sorrow sit," illustrating "King John." Death, darkness, night—they are

glass * * *. Trophies of old coats of mail, Indian shields made of rhinoceros's bows, arrows and spears—all supposed to be taken by Sir Terry Robsart in the holy wars."

Surely the portrait of Mrs. Thomas Pelham, the lady with the sly glance in her Beatrice-Lillie face, displays Gothic taste, so rich and exotic her brocades and her chic hat adrip with pearls. It was painted by William Hoare, who links us to another of the century's romanticisms. For he is famous for his portrait of "Beau Nash" of Bath.

Nash was a go-getter, an organizer and super-salesman. Nash

OF AMERICA AND EUROPE

Landscape and Fantasy in Current Shows

By STUART PRESTON

THE Golden Age of American landscape—the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century—is the subject of the current exhibition of paintings at Kennedy & Co. It was a glamorous moment. In a few short years the painters living along the Atlantic coast realized that a vast and hitherto unpainted panorama was opening up to them and that its challenge demanded a response worthy of it. They were particularly fortunate in being the last generation and, consequently, the heirs of the great romantic and classical traditions of Europe. All that Claude and Turner, Cuy and the Germans had developed was their oyster; and being, with a few exceptions, longer in talent than in genuine inventiveness, they painted a grandiose and nostalgic finale to both traditions.

Inevitably, and because most of these artists had studied abroad, they began by imposing a European character on the continent primeval. Durand's villages are really more like seventeenth-century Holland than the bustling Yankee communities that they aim to represent, and George Inness imports more than a whiff of Barbizon to the New Jersey meadows. It is significant that perhaps the best painting here is Thomas Cole's polite and lordly view of Tivoli. But, gradually, local color asserted itself. Romanticism hardly survived the Civil War and the old European modes of vision became far-off things.

FANCY: The path away from reality, taken by John Wilde in his new paintings at the Edwin Hewitt Gallery, leads not to abstract splutterings but to a craft and unusually diverting dream