

M Reviews

Young artists for the next century

Victor Treacy Award Show
Butler Gallery
Brian Fallon

THIS annual award continues to attract much attention and prestige, particularly since the GPA Awards are now defunct, and even to be entered for the final choice represents a degree of kudos for any young artist. There are eight of them included in the exhibition in the Butler Gallery in Kilkenny, all very different from one another, and all suggesting that they would thoroughly merit solo exhibitions in their own right.

Rosie McGurran, the eventual winner, is a Northerner as her name indicates, and is currently in Rome on a fellowship to the British School there; her award therefore came *in absentia*. Her style relates both to the New Image painting of the Eighties and to the more "socially conscious", quasi-expressionist style now common both in Belfast and in Glasgow and Edinburgh. More importantly, however, she has a genuine painterly touch and a dimension of almost surreal imaginativeness.

The only photographer included, John Gerrard, might well have been the winner if he had not frittered away some of his available space instead of concentrating on just a few

broad, immediate pieces. He is, however, plainly both gifted and technically adroit, and somebody to follow over the next decade. Sarah Durcan's delicate, filmy, understated pictures need only a stronger, more definite type of imagery to become genuinely memorable.

Brian Fay's abstracts are severe, simplified, and well painted, though also slightly unadventurous; most of this has been done before. Much the same could be said of Trevor Ahern, though he has a more linear approach which suggests that his true metier might be large-scale decorative schemes. Catherine M. Lynch has a freer, looser style close to abstract expressionism, while Tim Humphries paints in an involuted, highly personal manner which verges on preciosity. The witty painting of Blaise Drummond has been seen recently at the Rubicon Gallery in Dublin.

If not quite the equal overall of last year's outstandingly talented exhibition, the 1997 show is not only solid in quality in its own right, but also offers several pointers to the near future. In the nature of things, several of these young artists should be prominent figures in Irish art of the next century, now bearing up on us with the speed of the Tokyo Express.

● *Runs until December 7th.*