

Long Weekend 14

It may be art, but is it sense?

OF the many group shows this week, Heide Gallery's is most diverting. It's called, in a nice twist by the woman curator, *33 Men Painters; A Male Sensibility?*

This idea makes as much or as little sense as trying to isolate A Woman's Sensibility; rather like defining The Soul. Still, each of these men may well reveal some aspect of the M.S.

Is it present in Morgan's solitary lusts at the strip-joint? In Larter's version of sex and violence? Perhaps, in Boyd's painting, it's Nebuchadnezzar's fiery red testicles and the Life Force; or maybe Parr's warped and macho self-image.

It may be discernible in Smart's image of the tough-cookie developer, or implied by the lovely Marianne, trapped nude within Brack's pictorial anxieties.

There's a flat, male detachment in the way Delafield-Cook looks drily at Glover's old Tasmanian paradise.

No doubt some of the male attitudes here will be deeply offensive to some women, and to some men; but then this is art, and people have often made great art from much nastier assumptions about life. In any case, the curator has very properly chosen with a discriminating eye for a good painting, rather than with any strong feminist bias. She has let the pictures do the work.

The exhibition is very good.

* Some of the Monash Collec-

ART

Ronald Millar

tion's major works are grouped in its **Visual Arts Gallery**, the emphasis on early works by interesting artists. My pick of these: Edwin Tanner's aloof circuit-people standing with their little doors open; a good Michael Johnson and an even better Kemp; an eerie Blackman of the Princes Bridge Station, Maggie May's prints. Many other good things; but Aspden has not worn well, the Frater's surface has gone very dull, and Partos's Picassoids are really his student work; he deserves to be represented by a mature one.

* Rodick Carmichael's solid show at **Realities** develops some lively images in series: repeated skull-with-landscape variations, amorphous and writhing figure groups, twisted cloth emblems and tendrils that recall the Japanese dress rituals; bush burials with floating bird-forms, private and family reminiscences. All very professional; handsomely painted, un-trendy, personal.

* At the **ACCA Gallery**, the curator asserts that culture, and not nature, dictates our vision of landscape painting. Well, both do, of course. It is not exactly news, and only half the story anyway. This elementary proposition is the cue for some of these painters to seek inspiration from reproductions instead of darting off into the scrub; as if that were the only alternative.

Curators may assert whatever they like, but in the end one

believes the paintings. Or not. And the only paintings here with any spark of life (except for a real one by Von Guerard himself) come, wild and tacky, from Therese Oulton. Then, down the list, Susan Norrie, with some labored surfaces. After that, Imants Tillers, in another of his sterile exercises, gets out his conceptual step by step kit to do his own Von Guerard. Some unimpressive little paintings by Tony Clark may have been included as the boring extension of a boring theory.

Von Guerard would have thought all this a very back-handed tribute.

* At **Gryphon Gallery**, real Japanese art from Yohji Haijima, made from collaged paper, and colored with pastel and acrylics to produce a gentle eroticism (more male sensibility). It's a joyful and tasteful show, the calligraphic line and gesture bursting across the surface in celebration of fleshy encounters and idyllic moments. Too much lolly-pink, perhaps; his black drawing looks, oddly, the fleshiest. A distinguished performance.

* Stanley Farley's **Tolarno** exhibition is heavily loaded with surreal symbols for personal trauma. The wheel-symbol is central to all this: broken cart-wheels with blood-stained spikes, circular metal clamps with protruding nails, old tyres as traps, suns with rays like spokes. The other obsession is with scarred and gashed limbs; no torso or head. The flesh is vulnerable, but so is the Bendigo landscape, even the dry earth showing blood-soaked perforations.