



A wide thematic range

Bryan McFarlane's current one-man show, mounted at the Mutual Life Gallery in its new location, has the requisite ingredients of a major artistic event, that is a wide thematic range, inspired by his travels in Brazil, Turkey and Europe, highly individual style, and fluid, self-assured technique which only a few of his contemporaries can equal.

It looks good in the setting which is spacious and well lit now that the columns, previously lining the walls, have been removed.

Over the years, McFarlane's philosophy of art and indeed of life itself, derived from syncretism which is an attempt to unify or reconcile different schools of thoughts. He is thus strongly opposed to art which is Eurocentric or ethnocentric. Yet he is also sharply conscious that syncretism may lead to inconsistency of accepting incompatible principals or ideas; and this is well reflected in the exhibition in two companion watercolour paintings "Patterns of Conflict".

Basically, however, he does not waver and his vision is firmly rooted in heightened romanticism and poeticism. If he has shifted his ground at all it is possibly in his attitude to the religious experience.

If, for instance, in his Brazilian series some years ago he would focus his attention on the ritual of lighting the candles in a church, he now, in a much more abstract style, focuses on the aura of profound mystery that this ritual may engender. In such oil paintings as "Light" (1, 2 and 3) it is the light alone, without human figures, that dominates the composition. Similarly,



ARTISTIC INSIGHT

Andrew Hope

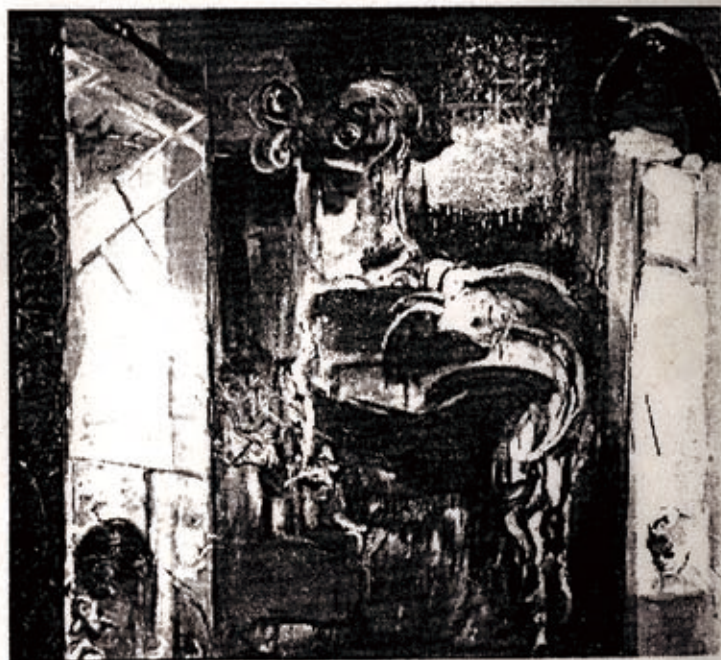
in "Interior III", (from the Bath Series) showing the sombre interior of a traditional, Brazilian bath house, one no longer encounters women bathers; rather one is called upon to see it as a

holy place for purification of the soul.

Elsewhere, McFarlane's interest in interiors spreads to ancient gateways, these being successors to arches in his previous exhibitions, symbolic of transcendence.

His romanticism and poeticism work well in the large oil paintings and equally well in the watercolours. Here the more subtle

or low-keyed colours of the former give way to a stunning pyrotechnic display ranging over floral composition, nudes, parkland scenes and images of lovers. It is undoubtedly McFarlane's most impressive one-man show to date.



Two pieces in Bryan McFarlane's Ancient Gateways series.
(Photos: Michael Stoley)