

**Sophia Wyatt**

## Eminent British Artists Showing In Venice, Our Venice, California

I couldn't believe my eyes: Sir William Coldstream, Lucien Freud (*the* Freud's grandson) David Hockney, Howard Hodgkin, Euan Uglow, Frank Auerbach, Francis Bacon, R. B. Kitaj, and Leon Kossoff, any one of whom in a one man show in London would bring a fashionable convergence of viewers, were all here together, in the L.A. Louver Gallery, 55 N. Venice Boulevard, Venice, CA.

As Peter Goulds, the British proprietor of the gallery says of them, "This exhibition brings together a group of British painters who are preoccupied with making pictures that explore the figure and human landscape. To a generation of art students during the Sixties, their work was in many respects a guiding light. To a generation in the Seventies, their influence has been a thorn in the side of the argument that painting is dead."

I remember attending the first retrospective exhibition of Francis Bacon (now incredibly 77 years old) at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London in 1955, and what an occasion that was, of monocles, rolled umbrellas and bowler hats! Bacon was too gory for my taste at the time. I did not know then he was the precursor of gorier days to come. Today of course he is the guru of gore. R. B. Kitaj, the

only American in this show who lives and worked in London and is 30 years younger than Bacon, and works in an entirely different *genre* nevertheless says of Bacon, "He is arguably the finest painter alive." Of David Hockney his young contemporary (also in the show) Kitaj says, "He is the most intelligent, thoughtful, meticulous draughtsman in the world." When artists speak so generously, the works are well worth exploring.

It may not be a gauge of their work, but it is an unspoken guarantee of eminence if an artist has had a one-man show at the Marlborough Fine Art Gallery in London and if his works are in public collections such as the Arts Council of Great Britain. All of these artists bear these or similar honours—modestly.

It is a compliment to Venice that these distinguished artists are exhibiting there, and indeed in the tranquillity of the gallery it is the right place. This art demands stillness for viewing without the sibilant intrusion of docents, bloated catalogues and armed guards. This is art for all ages. A family day at the sea can incorporate a visit to L.A. Louver Gallery, open Tuesday through Saturday 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Why is this so appealing to everyone? Because, as Kitaj says, the artists are "working in the image of people."