

INSIDEarts

Young focus on faces

gallery
watch

CLYDE SELBY

**RACT Youth Portraiture Prize**

Sidespace Gallery, off Long Gallery,
Salamanca Place, until April 14
Price range: by negotiation

ASPIRANT young artists have to wait only until they turn 15 to be able to enter this competition. (Those in their late 20s will be heartened to know that the RACT generously regards them as youths until they have clocked up three decades.)

For only a couple more days, the finalists in the quest to capture the likenesses of Tasmanian people are on display. Accuracy of visage is most important, but so too are the inner being and the essence of the portrait's subject.

Predictably for the youthful, family members are well represented. Reuben in all his whimsical uncertainty has been transmitted in watercolours by his mother, Rachael Gates. Abbey MacDonald studied a photograph of a young Scotsman destined to become her father and has managed to paint his enigmatic qualities, while Renee Spurr has drawn her grandmother as she was in 1956.

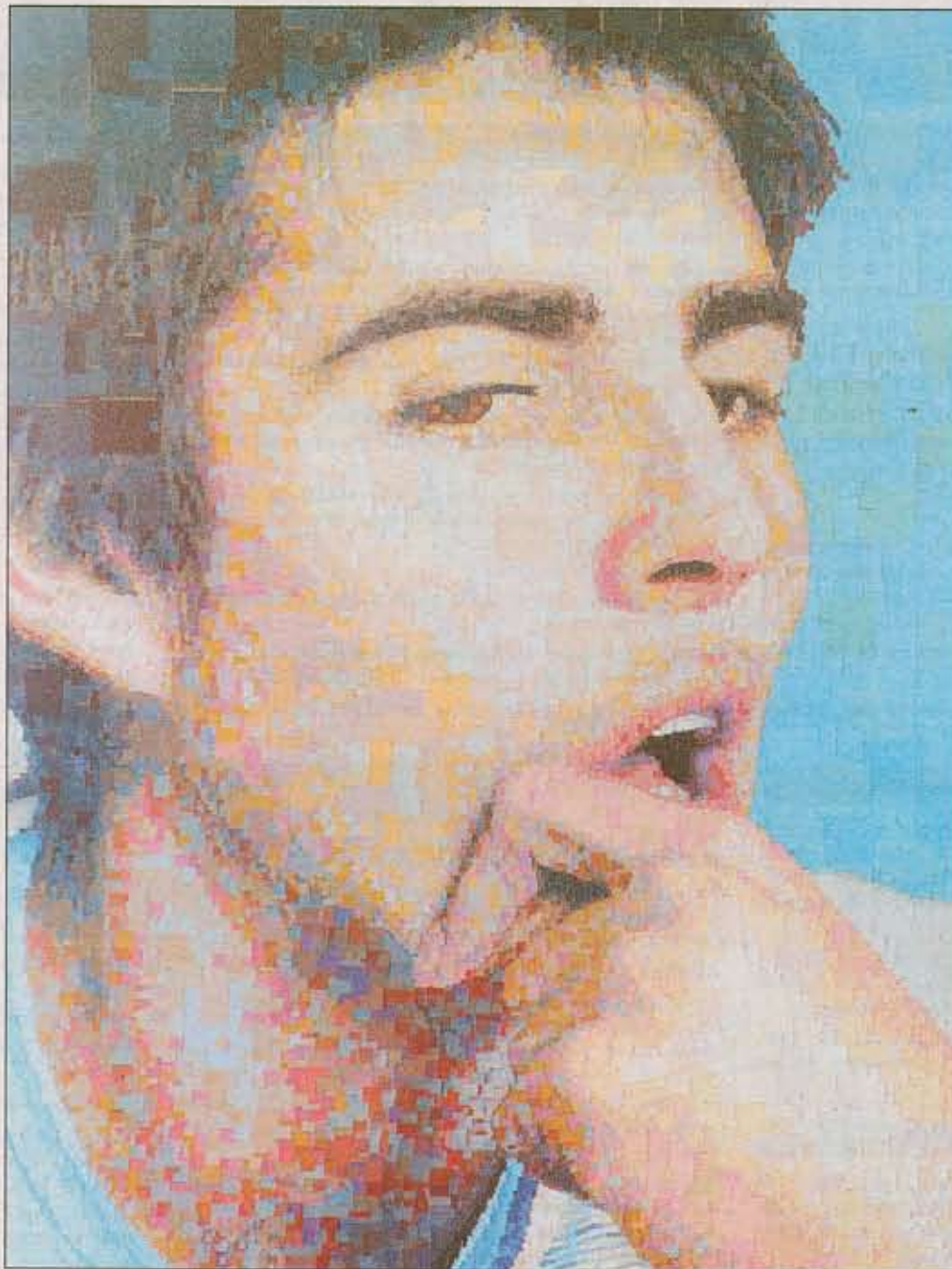
Jim Wilkinson MLC has been shown in an interesting off-centre way by Hamish Lyons Hall, and etched onto Maya Komaromy's face by Catherine Peacock is her triumph over adversity.

Kate Bassett by Jai Sutton-Bassett captures an urban eccentric with a quite realistic style, as do the analogous mercury and the mad hatter in Elia Bassett's portrait of one of this newspaper's sub-editors, Peter Hercus.

Self-portraiture is surely more difficult, but the one of Hilton Owen, complete with cow, was deemed by the judges to be the winner. Second place went to Susannah Hart who reveals much of her anatomy but, oddly for a portrait, not her face. Adventurously, Meegan Pearce has shown herself in quite reductive monochrome.

Nadia Mahjouri, skilfully portrayed by Skye Targett, would have benefited from the full length of the adjacent Long Gallery to view her properly. However, when seen with eyes more than half-closed, the seemingly abstract squares merge into illusory life.

Jacob Leary has contrived a large and quite extraordinary self-portrait using paint-shop colour swatches. It is reminiscent of aspects of the late-19th-century schools of pointillism and



SEEING HIMSELF: Jacob Leary's *Self-Portrait With My Hand*.

post-impressionism. The way he has conveyed the skin tones and shadows of his partly obscured face is commendable, as is his undoubted perseverance with such a medium. It is unlikely that he would be contemplating a lifelong career using this style, however.

scenes, as well as a beautifully executed *The Ship's Cat*.

Miniatures

Inka Gallery, 16/77 Salamanca Place,
until April 23
Price range: \$45-\$100

THERE is a connection between Tasmania and miniatures. Many of the first miniature portraitists were convicts who had been convicted of forgery.

Small pictures were requested from the 16 members of the Inka Co-operative. Nevertheless, they are considerably larger than ones that could be worn in a locket — indeed, only E. Brinsdon chose to represent people.

Indicative of environmental awareness is the fact that L. Hunman's studies of Tasmanian devils were immediately sold.

Blue and brown acrylics cause *Enchanted Woods* by A. Boyd to live up to their name, while H. Toledo has captured a koala and her baby with wax painting.

As a contrast, S. Houstein has toned photopolymer collages with their mounts and frames to create composite abstract statements.

Repetitions

Plimsoll Gallery, UTAS Centre for the Arts,
Hunter St, Hobart
Daily noon-5pm until April 25

FOUR video artists and/or teachers of non-theatrical cinema have recorded their "raw sensual experience of a place" by using electronic installations. Without dialogue, actors, sound effects or a narrative, they create some fascinating images.

Martin Walch's digital numerals transmogrify into landscapes, while Leigh Hobba, with his predatory fish, has watery ripples in the moonlight splashing onto the floor. There are others to behold in this exhibition of visual wizardry.

A CHINESE
PUZZLE IN
BRAIN TRIPscience
watch

STANLEY ROBERT



DYSLEXIA, from the Greek "dys" meaning impaired and "lexis" meaning word, is a learning disorder that affects between 5 and 17 per cent of children.

It is not a visual disorder, as was originally thought, but a processing problem within the brain.

Dyslexics have difficulty associating letters with their correct corresponding sounds, and vice versa. This makes it difficult to read and write but not, usually, a problem to speak.

One interesting question that is raised is whether dyslexia occurs among speakers of all languages. Does it exist, for example, among Chinese speakers, considering that written Chinese is composed of complex characters which represent whole words, rather than individual sounds as is the case with letters in English?

The answer to that is yes — but the fascinating discovery, as described by researchers from Hong Kong and Beijing in the most recent issue of the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA*, is that there is a crucial difference.

Recent studies, in which the brains of dyslexic English-speaking children were scanned while reading, have shown a reduction in activity in a part of the brain known as the left temporoparietal region. This region is known to be involved in the translation of letters into sounds and vice versa.

Not only was there less activity in this region in the brains of dyslexics but there was actually less grey matter within those regions, compared with normal children, as well. For some reason this part of the brain had not developed correctly.

In the current study, the researchers scanned the brains of Chinese-speaking dyslexics and were amazed to discover there was no problem at all with the left temporoparietal region. There was, however, a marked reduction in activity and grey matter in a different region of the brain, known as the left middle frontal gyrus, a part of the brain known to be used in the recognition and interpretation of symbols and shapes.

Chinese text is comprised of symbols and shapes, so perhaps it's not so surprising this is the brain region that is defective in Chinese dyslexics.

What is amazing is that two quite different brain regions can be responsible for a single learning disorder — the dyslexia in Chinese and English appears identical.

This raises another intriguing question which, incidentally, is one of the great things about scientific endeavour.

Would the Chinese dyslexics be dyslexic in English and would the English dyslexics be dyslexic in Chinese?

Offhand, one would have to say no, because the wrong regions of the brain are faulty. Trying to answer this could help identify what triggers dyslexia in the first place. What would happen if English dyslexics were taught Chinese? Would they acquire a brain malfunction in the left middle frontal gyrus and develop Chinese dyslexia?

Are there any bilingual Chinese-English people who are doubly dyslexic?

forestry
TALKS
Islands in the Forests

Islands in the Forests takes an historic / archaeological view of the expansion and contraction of the occupation and use of Tasmania's landscape over the past 200 years.

1.00pm Wed 16 April
Forestry Tasmania
79 Melville St, Hobart
Bookings ph: 6233 8219

Prints

Colville Street Art Gallery, Battery Point,
until April 24
Price range: \$385-\$3500

THERE is graphic evidence of spitting and biting at the Colville Gallery. Of course, I refer not to temperamental artists having tantrums but to the centuries-old etching process where corrosive acid is mixed with liquid — which these days is not saliva.

Madeleine Goodwolf is one of several who have used spitbite, together with aquatint, drypoint and another esoteric technique called sugarlift, to create an atypical Tasmanian hillscape, *Late in the Day*.

On display from the Port Jackson Press is a great diversity of printmaking styles. Top of the range is *Gotcha* by John Olsen, who has lyrically extended our appreciation of the wildlife in the vast Outback, followed by *Terra Nocturne* by Milan Milojevic. "Digital woodcut" sounds like a contradiction in terms, but this artist manages to achieve a one-time imagined new-world and strongly European appearance to his work while retaining modernity.

Jeff Makin, a plein air painter of much repute, combines a unique formalist and expressionist approach to his landscapes. *Great Western Tiers* is an impressive etching featuring an agrarian setting with rain-laden clouds.

Soft etching in the form of burnished aquatint has been used to great effect by Louise Tomlinson for her drizzly, sleety