

- ❑ *The life of Robert Burns celebrated*
- ❑ *A great Scottish mystery investigated*

London lights **SX**

Poetry in motion

ACCENT ON ART

— With Estelle Lovatt

SCOTTISH ARTISTS CELEBRATING ROBERT BURNS

Rebecca Hossack Gallery, 35 Windmill Street, W1.
Until February 10.

THE great poet Robert Burns must rank as the hottest Scottish export since the haggis and bagpipes.

Celebrating the 200th anniversary of the death of the bard, contemporary Scottish artists are demonstrating how inspirational his poetry is by exhibiting pieces that are as assertive and interesting as Burns is earthy.

Colin Johnstone keeps Burns' momentum going in *Clipp'd Tongue (Speak Fuckin' English)*. Because the Scottish language has been largely forgotten, Johnstone sets the vowels A, E, I, O and U on a tartan background. The fact that Burns never managed the pronunciation of the English dialect, and never got used to the banning of tartan clothing, is thereby acknowledged.

Abby McLellan's wonderful canvas *Hot House* shows a figure relaxing. This naive yet sophisticated image embeds a moment of contemplation and captures the mood of the poet as he recognised the strength of each day.

Fred Pollock's striking abstract painting *Frinton*



● *Green Jug* by Abigail McLellan.

Field is deeply concerned with the building of relationships through colour and shape.

Peter Thompson challenges escapism through fantasy. *Plotting the Route* explores how our planet is being knocked down and corrupted by a deprived and depressed society.

With the man shown polluting the sea, and cutting down the last existing tree, the gallery-goer is made aware of how we are ruining the world.

Abusing our privileged status, we are killing off nature by sacrificing ourselves.

Alasdair Wallace's *Landscape with Lights* portrays a man snoozing by bright beams. A sense of solitude is reached as a ghostly inner security shapes the night.

George Wyllie displays a bottle of whiskey, hay, a shortbread biscuit and a potato peeler in a Burns Survival Kit tin. These are simply obvious objects of powerful reference to the Scottish.

These artists work as a team, echoing each other's admiration for Burns. Here, the best of Scottish poetry is spiritually underlined by the best of Scotland's contemporary artists.

Wonderful stuff.

JANA STERBAK: VELLEITAS
Serpentine Gallery,
Kensington Gardens, W2.
Until February 25.

● JANA Sterbak is interested in exploring the human figure. Symbolic of the body and its desires, *Seduction Couch* is an inviting chaise longue that crackles dangerously with electricity, giving short sharp shocks!

Measuring Tape Cones are dressmaker's tapes bent into menacing yet sleek looking cone-shapes.



● *Chemise de nuit* by Jana Sterbak.

Measurements are obvious indicators of the condition of the body and of the time. So Sterbak uncovers the limitations of mortality.

A video of a stuttering man reciting *The 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man* is a frustrating piece, as the gallery-goer battles with his speech handicap. It's such a relief when he finishes! Proving that we relate to his disability easier than we do to what he is talking about.

The dress *Chemise de Nuit* examines sex. Being see-through, a body would be seen wearing it and would subsequently be seen as flesh minus an identity, personality or character.

This gown has large, child-bearing hips, providing a feminine equation to its masculine chest of

hairs, inserted across the ribs.

As clothes represent our gender, class and role in society, science is amalgamated with the visual, through art. And this is Sterbak's point. Art imitates life and vice versa.

Sisyphus III is an aluminium and chrome, egg-like construction, linking memories of the past to the present. A film of a man balancing inside this shell looks like he is dancing. His movements disguise his difficulties, as Sterbak implies life's duties and chores are repeated, without choice.

A once in a lifetime experience. Don't miss it.