

# Hannah

A hand in a white glove is visible in the bottom right corner, pointing towards the text. The background is dark green with a subtle pattern of a crown and a shield.

MARCH 1996 £2.70

# & Queen



# A Month in the Arts

## Rebecca Hossack's Burns bicentenary

**T**O CELEBRATE THE bicentenary of Robert Burns, who died in 1796, and his place at the heart of Scottish culture, I am arranging a show of contemporary Scottish artists at my gallery in London. In preparation, I travelled to Scotland. George Wylie met me at Glasgow station and took me home for lunch. George is a 74-year-old artist with an unquenchable store of energy, wit and curiosity. He lives at Courock overlooking the Firth of Clyde. His house was immediately recognisable; it looked like a fantastical ark, with strange animals fashioned from shipyard scrap grazing in the front garden.

'George loves boats of every description. He built the largest paper boat in the world and sailed it into New York harbour in 1990. His loves, however, spiral off in many directions. He is a man of passion: he loves steam engines, standing stones, his wife Daphne, shortbread, William Blake, equilibrium and Robbie Burns.

'George has plans for a series of 'Burns Survival Kits' (tartan shortbread tins stocked with an idiosyncratic selection of useful objects). Also on show during the exhibition will be two giant 'wally dug's (Staffordshire dogs) broadcasting Scottish country music from concealed speakers.

Over our lunch of fried haddock and strong tea he expounded upon the similarities between the Scots and the Australians – both nations of outsiders, but with a directness of vision that comes from living on the perimeter.

'Most of the other artists I visited live



Rebecca Hossack: Gallery-owner and Australian cultural attaché

and work in Glasgow. It is one of the curiosities of Scotland (to an outsider at least) that, while Edinburgh stands among the most beautiful cities in the world, and Glasgow has been hacked about by Sixties' town planners, it is in Glasgow that most of the artists choose to be. The wonderful Glasgow School of Art probably has much to do with it. Designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh, it has fostered a vital and continuing tradition of painting in a manner that few – if any – English art schools can match.

'In chill little studios no bigger than cubicles, I sipped strong tea and looked

at extraordinary visions: Alasdair Wallace's exquisitely painted landscapes peopled with mysterious yet familiar figures; Helen Flockhart's beguiling domestic dramas; Peter Thompson's antediluvian panoramas; and Abigail McClellan's soft-hued still lifes. My plans, however, to visit Colin Johnstone, an artist living on Orkney, were swept away in a blizzard of snow: a telling instance of nature asserting its dominance over art.' □  
*'Burns Night', a show of contemporary Scottish art, is at the Rebecca Hossack Gallery, 35 Windmill Street, London w1 until 1 March*

## Smart tickets

**Art** A key show this month is the RA's retrospective of Lord Leighton (1830-1896), one of the finest practitioners of Victorian classicism, whose Greek swimming-pool scenes presage Hockney (15 February-21 April). Further afield, the golden years of sculptor Jasper Johns (mid-Fifties to early Sixties) are on show at the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds (from 18 April).

**Television** *Karaoke* and *Cold Lazarus* are the two drama serials the late Dennis Potter wrote during the final weeks of his illness. Potter, who named his cancer Rupert (Murdoch, in case there was any doubt), abhorred the corrosive influence of the media mogul, and *Karaoke* is the story of a writer (played by Albert Finney) struggling to maintain his integrity in the face of death, and who is 'revived' in *Cold Lazarus* in the year 2,368

and exploited by entertainment men. Both to be screened simultaneously on BBC1 and Channel 4, as Potter requested. **Theatre** After a fallow 1995, there is a glut of musicals in the West End, most trumpeted of which is *Tommy* (Shaftesbury Theatre, from 5 March), the rock opera written by Pete Townshend and The Who. (It actually won five Tony awards on Broadway, so don't let the Ken Russell film of the same dissuade.) Others forth-

coming include Sondheim's *Passion*, *Martin Guerre* from the *Les Mis* team, and a revival of *Jesus Christ Superstar* in October. **Dance** Unmissable is Les Grands Ballets Canadiens' spring tour, which includes their own Mark Morris ballets as well as an early William Forsythe piece (0171-713 6000). Ditto the feet-stomping, blood-stirring *Tap Dogs*, the surprise dance hit of last year's Edinburgh Festival, at the Lyric, Shaftesbury Ave from 27 March.