

ART SHOW

The Star
JHB 19/7/1966

Young Italian's theme of Man and Struggle

THE EXHIBITION: Buffa (Gallery 101).

By MARY PACKER

MANY ARTISTS have fallen under the spell of a single theme so insistent as to demand repetition in varying forms but few if any (in this country) have, like Giovanni Buffa, presented an exhibition devoted entirely to one absorbing, almost obsessive idea.

Buffa's theme, in his first one-man show in South Africa, is based on "Man and the Universe": a series of large paintings, challenging criticism in their similarity in size and design and symbolizing the Promethean struggle of the human creature to emerge into full spiritual knowledge and freedom.

PRIMEVAL PLANT

Their dissimilarity lies in subtle differences of detail and in the varying keys of dissolving colour used for each new presentation. (They also seem to symbolize the artist's striving towards perfection.)

Painted in a mixture of media, light catches the barely discerned figure—a thigh here, a

breast or limb there—picking out, too, sections of the parasite tendrils which like some giant, primeval creeping plant bind him to earth.

The painter's draughtsmanship and technical attainment never flag. They explain this young Italian's inclusion in the Venice Biennale and in other important exhibitions and collections in Europe.

He arrived in Johannesburg early this year. If he decides to remain here (as he may) his work, like that of several other Italian contemporaries now settled in this country, will be something to look forward to in future exhibitions.

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IN Gallery 101, Giovanni Buffa, an Italian artist exhibiting for the first time in this country, has a number of extraordinary pictures on show. He has an interesting technique and makes use of a number of media, such as charcoal, oil and gouache, in which he works out curious constructions which must come from the private recesses of his mind.

His composition is repeated in a slightly different form over and over again, until one must conclude that the artist is obsessed with it. I think the effect detracts from the exhibition as a whole.

I looked in vain for something concrete on which I could begin to base my ideas. There is a suggestion of the human figure in some sort of torment, but, beyond his technique, there is very little.

Well, perhaps that is the artist's way of putting over a message, but for me it is still very much in cypher.

VIEW.