

Welsh Expressionist

by HUW PRICE

Oan Llywelyn Hall is currently exhibiting at St. David's Hall, Cardiff. The exhibition, entitled *Wales: Dead or Alive?*, runs until 30th September. It is a collaboration between Hall and Owen Sheers, the poetry and subsequently paintings inspired by the myth and landscape of Wales.

In his own words, Hall 'was a lazy boy' at school, and certainly didn't see himself becoming an artist, as he 'only got a C in art'. Originally he had studied graphic design but a rather frank talk with one of the tutors changed all that. From a foundation art course he moved on to an illustrator's course, from there he got a job illustrating the wine column in the *Independent*. In 2003 he won the *Sunday Times* Young Artist of the Year competition which this led to a few commissions. Things have progressed rapidly from there.

Hall likes commissions, as long as he is allowed a certain amount of free

rein. His next big project is a huge mural on the island of Mustique.

I am impressed that Hall who is still very young - 27 - seems to be making a living from his art and is now pursuing his profession full time. 'It is a gamble,' he says, 'exhibitions are a gamble: great when stuff sells, but really grim when it doesn't.' For sev-

"Expressionism is a style in which the intention is not to reproduce a subject accurately, but to portray it in such a way as to express the inner state of the artist. The movement is especially associated with Germany, and was influenced by such emotionally-charged styles as Symbolism, Fauvism, and Cubism."

eral years now CAMBRIA has been receiving emails and notices of his exhibitions. I ask him whether he is very driven in what he does. 'Yes,

very,' he replies, 'there is so much competition, and consequently there is a need to push yourself forward.' Hall needs to exhibit to have his work seen, and his ideas thought about and discussed. His painting is all about giving longevity to his ideas and putting them on record. For Hall, the "mystery of image" is 'very powerful and can be viewed in so many different ways'.

Hall describes himself 'having an expressionist approach to painting - always changing and evolving.' He is a great admirer of Chaim Soutine whose influence can be seen in some of his paintings. For him technique is incredibly important, and it is always this that strikes him first when looking at paintings.

On 7th September his next exhibition 'Living Monuments' opens at the Washington Gallery in Penarth. It is a subject very much in keeping with what he feels drives him. 'Living Monuments' encompasses sites from all over Britain, and Hall hopes that his series of paintings conveys not only the physical site but at some level the memories embodied there and their relevance to the present. 'Landscape has been pushed to the periphery of modern life, I like it when it kicks back,' he says.

Hall feels that Welsh artists are not taken seriously enough on the international scene, Ceri Richards almost certainly is, but, he says, not even Kyffin Williams is a serious contender, as the recent sale of Kyffin's chair through an auction house in Bath for only a few pounds shows. Even here in Wales attitudes to contemporary art are still fairly parochial, as he says 'the National Library is leading the way but apart from one or two galleries there is not serious support for modern Welsh art'.

Also showing at the St. David's Hall is Frances Valaydon Pillay, whose abstract paintings, once again inspired by Owen Sheers, express the emotions evoked by the landscape he writes about. 📖

