

economist Sir William deplored; though perhaps the need for statistics on the small scale that the study of a primitive community allows has been overlooked in the past. In its insistence upon the biological bases of culture it keeps in close touch with the natural sciences. The temptation to leave the field of scientific detachment for that of partisan controversy must be at least as great for the anthropologist as for any other social scientist; and opinions differ as to the extent to which the scientist may have the right or even the duty to yield to that temptation.

Nigerian Art Exhibition.

AN exhibition of modern Nigerian wood-carvings, terra-cottas, and water-colours was opened in London on July 6 by the Secretary of State for the Colonies. The exhibition was arranged by Mr. K. C. Murray, Superintendent of Art Training for the Nigerian Government Education Department, and the 86 exhibits were the work of five Africans aged from 17 to 28 years.

Mr. Murray explains in his introduction to the catalogue that all the artists have received an education which, though adapted to African conditions, compares fairly closely with that given at English secondary schools. The teaching of art has been strictly limited to instruction in technique and every effort has been made to avoid imposing European conventions. Perspective, for instance, has not been taught. The students learn much from each other but without any direct copying. Photographs of the art of other countries and especially of Africa have been shown where possible, for it seemed necessary to establish some standards of taste since so many illustrations and advertisements in English books and newspapers are inevitably seen.

The general impression given by the exhibition is the remarkable uniformity of mind shown by all the exhibitors regardless of their age, tribe, or religion. Mr. Murray says that Uthman M. Ibrahim was the first to have training and has thus indirectly inspired the others, but this fact is not in itself an adequate explanation of the uniformity noticed. Those of us who are acquainted with the works of art produced in Southern Nigeria both to-day and in the past by unschooled craftsmen working in the traditional style on objects for religious and other purposes, will recognize that this traditional style has survived strongly in all the exhibits. This fact must be regarded as greatly to the credit of the European teachers who have not forced an unreal personality or false individuality upon their pupils.

The ordinary visitor to the exhibition is likely to be in some danger of comparing the work shown with that of certain modern artists such as the painter Rousseau and the sculptor Barlach, but such a comparison is not justifiable. While men like Rousseau and Barlach abstract and simplify with a highly sophisticated knowledge of form and line, these young Nigerians are obviously in search of that knowledge and have to fight an inherited tendency to abstract form. This arises from the fact that most

primitive works of art are portrayals of imaginary beings such as gods or spirits. They exhibit the characteristics of the legendary figure and not the lineaments of an observed object. This ignorance of form and anatomy—particularly in the case of animals—is especially noticeable in the plastics.

As sculpture is the most important and the traditional product of West African art, one is inclined to assume that the modern artists' best work will be in this medium; but it must not be forgotten that art in our sense is something entirely novel to the African, and that in sculpture, where the artist is rigidly bound by his traditional methods and conception, his greatest difficulty is to abandon the fixed characteristics of his abstract figures and mould forms closer to the natural objects which he has hitherto disregarded. In the use of a completely new technique, such as water-colour, there is no temptation to use traditional forms, no inherited tendency to be artificially suppressed. Not until the modern African consciously controls anatomic form will he be able to produce plastics of the high standard reached unconsciously—in the psychological sense—by his ancestors.

Ibeto shows, for instance, a really excellent terra-cotta head of a Yoruba boy which, though it does not reach the high quality of the famous Ifé heads, is, nevertheless, on the way to that standard. Though by no means naturalistic, the head shows that the shape of a skull is thoroughly understood. At the same time, however, he shows a dog in Iroko wood with an amusing ornamental treatment of the surface which does not hide the artist's total ignorance of the poor beast's anatomy.

Enwonwu's drummer shows a great sense of humour and the typical African gift for caricature. Umana's boy carrying a water-pot is, perhaps, the best example of this non-comprehension of anatomy. The limbs appear to be merely stuck on to the body and not growing out of it. The little cat in cam wood by the same artist is just as 'unnatural' as Ibeto's dog, but has great charm and is based on genuine tradition.

In the water-colours the different personalities of the artists—despite the uniformity of mind previously mentioned—become more obvious. The two extremes are, perhaps, Ibeto and Enwonmu. The former seems, of all five, to be the one most influenced by western civilization. His 'Sipping Water' shows a perfectly conscious effort at abstraction and search for simple lines and planes. In opposition to such work stands Enwonmu's 'Omu Market' in which the African's delight in arranging small objects and laying them out in ornamental patterns—as may be seen on every market—is given full play.

In composition the water-colours are most of them too well balanced, which has the effect of making them somewhat dull. Good examples of this trait are Ibrahim's 'Path at Ofe Eke' and Umana's 'Ravine'; while the composition of 'Cutting of Palm Fruit' by Nnachi shows strong independence of personality, as does also Enwonwu's 'Wrestling Contest'. The latter's charming 'Journey' is full of fantasy and individualistic in treatment.

The response to colour is without exception very good. This is to be expected, for the African's natural understanding of colour is obvious to any one who has seen with what care and taste he blends colours in his costume. The African, in fact, possesses every natural quality necessary to the artist and if he once discovers his true personality and gains independence of Western influence he will certainly succeed in producing work of a high order. The work exhibited shows that these five young men have taken their first step towards that end. (*Communicated by* DR. G. PFEFFER.)

Rhodes-Livingstone Institute of Central African Studies.

THE year 1940 will mark not only the jubilee of the foundation of the two Rhodesias in 1890 by Cecil Rhodes, but also the centenary of the departure for Africa in 1840 of David Livingstone. It is proposed that this double anniversary should be commemorated in Northern Rhodesia by the establishment of a Rhodes-Livingstone Institute of Central African Studies which will serve as a combined memorial to these two famous men, in the fulfilment of whose ideals lies the best hope for the future of British Central Africa.

The Rhodes-Livingstone Institute is intended as a contribution to the scientific efforts now being made in various quarters to examine the effect upon native African society of the impact of European civilization, by the formation in Africa itself of a centre where the problem of establishing permanent and satisfactory relations between natives and non-natives—a problem of urgent importance where, as in Northern Rhodesia, mineral resources are being developed in the home of a primitive community—may form the subject of special study. The Institute will be situated at the town of Livingstone, the old capital of Northern Rhodesia, seven miles from the Victoria Falls of the River Zambezi, which forms the boundary between Northern and Southern Rhodesia, where the Government of Northern Rhodesia, generously helped by the Beit Railway Trust, the Council of the Royal Geographical Society, the Scottish National Memorial at Blantyre, and a number of individual benefactors, have already established a Museum which contains, in addition to objects of historical interest connected with David Livingstone, the nucleus of an important ethnological collection. This Museum is at present housed in what used to be the premises of the United Service Club, adjoining old Government House. It is proposed that these two buildings and the grounds in which they stand should be purchased and adapted to the purposes of the Institute at an estimated cost of £15,000 and vested in the Trust which has been formed by recent legislation in Northern Rhodesia for its general and financial control.

As a preliminary to the foundation of the new Institute and the incorporation with it of the existing Museum, the Northern Rhodesian Government are appointing an expert in applied anthropology who will subsequently be provided with an assistant if funds are available.