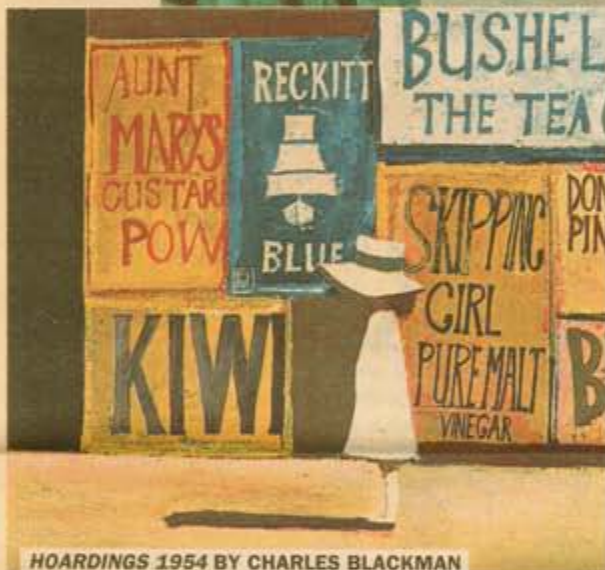


EXCITEMENT - BOWL BALANCER BY GUO JIAN



HOARDINGS 1954 BY CHARLES BLACKMAN

much-improved Seppelt Contemporary Art Prize and the just-opened Warhol show, which will be a deserving smash hit.

This year's Sydney Biennale, a massive enterprise anticipated with maximum intensity, got everyone steamed up, perhaps just because that seemed the only way to get any sort of interest going. To think at all about what this Biennale was trying to do was to fall into a funk that spiralled one way only: downwards.

Thankfully there was plenty else to hook into. The Art Gallery of NSW had a busy but, overall, unremarkable year until the **Cézanne** show opened a few weeks ago. This one is a triumph and everyone involved in getting it here - curator Terence Maloon in particular - deserves congratulations. The other highlights were the popular Emily Kngwarreye retrospective and *Modern Boy Modern Girl*, which lacked masterpieces but provided a fascinating insight into a seldom-considered period in Japanese history.

Some of the best shows this year were by photographers. One of these was **Tracey Moffatt's** internationally acclaimed series *Up*

in the Sky, which showed at Roslyn Oxley9 earlier in the year. (By worldly measure, Moffatt is Australia's most successful artist at the moment.) But probably no Australian artist can charge the distance between viewer and image with as much electricity as **Bill Henson**. His mid-winter show, also at Roslyn Oxley9, was salutary viewing for anyone doubting the continued potential of images to rearrange the pieces of your heart. Other photography highlights included Martyn Jolly's disconcerting *Nineteen Sixty-Three: News and Information*, Robert MacFarlane's photographic tribute to his son at the Australian Centre For Photography, and

Marketa Luskacova's *Unknown Remembered* at the new Stills Gallery in Paddington.

On the painting front, one trend vaguely discernible over the last few years came to a thundering head: empty, semi-abstract land- or sea-scapes. It almost got ridiculous there for a while: at one point there were half-a-dozen solo shows in Sydney all doing much the same thing. Several, however, stood out: Damian Moss, Chris Langlois and Philip Wolfhagen.

Other highlights included three Charles Blackman shows in August, excellent shows by Guo Jian at Tin Sheds, Robert Klippel at Watters, Glenn Morgan and Peter Cooley at Ray Hughes, Jo Bertini at Access, Ricky Swallow at Darren Knight, Warlpiri Men at Coo-ee, and Tim Maguire at Mori.

Ray Hughes Gallery probably takes out Gallery of the Year, after an astonishingly successful first six months. And **Brian Blanchflower's** show of paintings at Annandale Galleries is my vote for best solo show of the year.

■ SEBASTIAN SMEE