

A LOCAL ARTIST'S EXHIBITION.

MR. TOM VAN OSS' PICTURES IN OXFORD.

On Monday there opened at 22 Banbury Road, Oxford (Messrs. J. R. Osborn and Co.) one of those small but exceedingly attractive picture exhibitions which we are sometimes favoured with the chance of seeing, and which should certainly be visited before November 27th when it will close. In this case it has an added interest in that the pictures are those by Mr. Tom Van Oss, of Old Corner House, Deddington, an artist who has for the last few years been residing there.

The exhibition consists of some fifty pictures and what at once strikes the visitor is the extraordinary versatility of the artist. The paintings are mainly in oil, though there are sketches which show him equally at home in the use of other media. He has an extraordinary and unusual power of putting on his canvas most varied conceptions and he does so in each case with the technical skill and artistic temperament required. For instance, we have in "Down Below in H.M.S. Orion" a convincing and faithful presentation of the control platform of a battleship's engine room, but we pass from that to some delightful landscapes, replete with atmosphere, and with natural colouring and cloud effects, and then to a collection of portraits, alive with character, which it is rare to find so satisfactorily combined with the two preceding spheres of art.

The centre-piece of the portraiture section is naturally Mr. Van Oss' portrait of Admiral of the Fleet Sir Roger Keyes, a very striking example of the portrait painter's art and which arrests one's attention by the skill with which the artist has captured and transferred to his canvas the famous Admiral's features and expression. But all the portraits are good. Though smaller in size than that of the Rev. F. J. Lys, Provost of Worcester and a Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University, is quite equal to the Admiral's in conveying character. But the gem of this section, to our mind, is "My Son John." Never was a boy better painted, never has there looked out on one from a canvas such a delightful boyish face, full of life and brimming over with expressive humour, that kept us enthralled before the picture of John, and brought us back to it more than once.

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Mr. Van Oss is a skilful manipulator of light on his canvas. This is evidenced in all his landscapes, but it is especially so in the scenes which he has reproduced from Deddington. "The Meet of the Heythrop at Deddington" is an extraordinarily satisfying picture. It shows the hounds meeting in the Square, but one realises that it is more than a graphic record of an event. Incidentally, it shows Mr. Van Oss to be good at animal form. But the light and shade introduced into the picture demonstrate that the brush of an artist and not a mere recorder had been at work. This is an excellent example of how artistic skill converts a village record into a work of art. The same may be said, in a lesser degree, of the picture "Bowls at Deddington," where light plays an important part, and "Summer Wind, Hempton" is pleasing as a local scene in which the artist has captured atmospheric movement. Such another is "Thunder Clouds over Deddington." These, of course, are only a few examples and the other landscapes show the qualities here marked.

As though to further confound us with his versatility Mr. Van Oss appears as a decorative artist in sketches for mural paintings, the chief of which is one he has designed for the Dragon School, Oxford, and there are portfolios of studies of animals and character sketches which will repay the attention of the visitor. In the matter of character sketches we must not omit to mention those of Corsican types, which show, as do his larger portraits, how skilful this artist is in getting the features and underlying character of his subjects beneath his brush. It may seem an exaggeration to praise one artist equally in so many spheres of his art. A visit, which we strongly recommend, to the exhibition will show any who may feel so that we are justified in what we have written. And there is one other thing for which we are grateful to Mr. Van Oss and that is that there is no trace of the extreme and exotic modernity in his work. It is a refreshing exhibition, which cheers and exhilarates one.